

How to Study Paintings

THE APPRECIATION SERIES

CHARLES H. CAFFIN

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Charles H. Caffin

Libraries of Hope

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Appreciation Series

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Caffin, Charles H. (1908). *A Child's Guide to Pictures*. New York: Baker and Taylor Co.

Caffin, Charles H. (1908). *How to Study Pictures.* New York: Baker and Taylor Co.

Cover Image: *Die Kleine Kunstkennerin*, by August Friedrich Siegert, (1863). In public domain, source Wikimedia Commons.

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Appomattox, Virginia 24522

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Printed in the United States of America

Contents

A Child's Guide to Pictures 1
The Feeling for Beauty 3
Art and Her Twin Sister, Nature 10
Nature is Haphazard: Art is Arrangement 16
Contrast 23
Geometric Composition 32
Geometric Composition (Continued) 38
The Action, Movement and Composition of the Figure 46
The Classic Landscape 51
Naturalistic Composition 61
Naturalistic Composition (Continued) 69
The Naturalistic Landscape 77
Form and Color 87
Color 98
Color (Continued) 108
Color (Continued) 123
Color (Continued) 140
Brush-Work and Drawing 150
Subject, Motive, and Point of View 157
How to Study Pictures 173
Author's Note 175
Introduction 177
Giovanni Cimabue / Giotto Di Bondone 181
Tommaso Masaccio / Andrea Mantegna 188
Fra Angelico / Jan Van Eyck 199

Alessandro Botticelli / Hans Memling 207
Pietro Vannucci (Perugino) / Giovanni Bellini 217
Raphael Sanzio / Michael Wolgemuth 227
Leonardo Da Vinci / Albrecht Dürer 242
Tiziano Vecelli (Titian) / Hans Holbein the Younger 251
Antonio Allegri / Michelangelo Buonarroti 261
Paolo Caliari / Jacopo Robusti 271
Peter Paul Rubens / Diego Rodriguez De Silva Velasquez 281
Antony Van Dyck / Franz Hals 292
Rembrandt Van Rijn / Bartolome Esteban Murillo 300
Jacob Van Ruisdael / Nicolas Poussin 311
Meindert Hobbema / Claude Gellée 319
Jean Antoine Watteau / William Hogarth 326
Sir Joshua Reynolds / Thomas Gainsborough 336
John Constable / Joseph Mallord William Turner 345
Jacques Louis David / Ferdinand Victor Eugene Delacroix 355
Theodore Rousseau / Jean Baptiste Camille Corot 366
Jules Breton / Jean François Millet 376
Gustave Courbet / Arnold Boecklin 384
Dante Gabriel Rossetti / William Holman Hunt 394
Edouard Manet / Jozef Israëls 414
Pierre Puvis De Chavannes / Jean Leon Gerome 426
James Abbott McNeill Whistler / John Singer Sargent 436
Claude Monet / Hashimoto Gahō 445
Concluding Note 459

A Child's Guide to Pictures

By Charles H. Caffin

CHAPTER 1
The Feeling for Beauty

Some of you, I expect, collect photographs of pictures in connection with your history studies. These portraits of the principal characters and pictures, illustrating great events, places, costumes, and modes of living of the period, add greatly to the interest of your reading. They bring the past time vividly before your eyes.

But it is not this view of pictures that we are going to talk about in the present book. I shall have very little to say about the subjects of pictures — partly because you can find out for yourselves what subjects interest you; but mostly, because the subject of a picture has so very little to do with its beauty as a work of art. For it is this view of a picture, as being a work of art, that I shall try to keep before you.

I remember seeing the photograph of a picture hanging in a place of honor on the wall of a girl's room; and I asked her why she had chosen this particular one out of many that she had. You see that, in order to help anyone, you have to try to get into their minds, and find out how their minds are working; and as much of my work is with girls and boys, I try to get from them hints as to the best way of helping them. Well, this girl, let me tell you, bubbled over with life and fun, swam like a fish and climbed trees like a squirrel; but she had her thoughtful moods, when, as often as not, she would lay out her collection of photographs of pictures on the floor, and not only look at them, but think about them. And I have no doubt that she was in one of those moods, when she chose out this particular print and hung it on her wall, in order that she might see it often.

So I asked her why she had chosen it, and she said: "Because I liked it." I asked her why? "Oh, I don't know," she said. 'Now that is just the sort of girl or boy for whom I am writing this book. Not that I think that girl would have liked her picture any better for knowing why she liked it. Then, "What is the good," you ask, "of writing a book to help her to know?" A very shrewd question and quite to the

point. Let me try to answer it.

When the girl said she did not know why she liked the picture, I think she meant that she could not put into words what she felt. It was the feeling with which the picture filled her that made her like it. I could understand what she meant, because I remembered an experience of my own. The first time that I saw Raphael's *Disputá* which decorates a wall in one of the rooms of the Vatican in Rome, I had set out with my guidebook, intending to study all the paintings by Raphael that decorate these rooms. I entered the first room and, I suppose, looked round the walls and saw three other paintings; but all I recall during this visit was the *Disputá*. I sat down before it and remained seated! I do not know how long, but the morning slipped away. What I thought about as I looked at the picture I cannot tell you. My impression is that I did not think at all; I only felt. My spirit was lifted up and purified and strengthened with happiness. Returning to my hotel, I read about the picture in the guidebook. It appeared that one of the figures represented Dante. I had not noticed it, and as I read on I found out other things that I had missed; that, indeed, the whole subject, so far as it could be put into words, had escaped me. I had no knowledge of what the painting was about; only I had felt its beauty.

Since then I have studied the picture and discovered some of the means that Raphael employed to arouse this depth of feeling, and the knowledge has helped me to find beauty in other things.

So, to go back to my girl friend, I would not disturb the beauty of her feeling with teachy-teachy talk, any more than I would talk while beautiful music was being played. But, suppose in a simple way I could make her understand that I, too, felt the beauty of the picture; and, as I have learned a little how to express feeling in words, should try to tell her how I felt the beauty. Might it not add to her pleasure, if she discovered that I was putting into words some of the feeling that she herself had, and perhaps suggesting other beauties that she had not felt?

Well, that is what I hope to do for you in this book, to put some ideas into your head, that will lead you to look for and find more and more beauty in pictures and in nature and in life. Ideas, mark you, not words. We shall have to use words, but words are of no account,

unless they make you feel the idea contained in them.

I say feel; and you will notice I have used these words, feel and feeling, several times already. I have done so because I want to impress upon you that the enjoyment of beauty, whether in pictures or any other form, comes to us through feeling. It may lead to thinking, and perhaps should, but it does not begin with thinking or reasoning, as does, for example, algebra or geometry. Nor can we, as we say, "get it down fine," in the way we do with the Latin declensions. When you have learned them thoroughly, you know them once and for all, and you know about them just what every other girl and boy who has learned them knows. With feeling it is otherwise. What *you* feel is different to what *I* feel; we can never feel alike. No two people can. So I am not going to tell you what you ought to feel about pictures; nor am I going to try and persuade you to like one and not like another. Therefore, this book would not be much help to you in passing an examination about pictures, if anything so foolish could be supposed. But I hope it may start your imagination off in a great many new directions, and help you to discover more and more of beauty not only in pictures, but in life.

For we should study pictures not solely for their own sake, but also as a means of making our lives fuller and better. If you ask me what is the most beautiful thing in the world, I shall not say art, although I am writing about pictures — but life — its fullness of possibility and abundance of opportunity. Especially young life; the lives of you girls and boys, who, as yet, have so few mistakes to regret, so much to look forward to of promise and fulfillment. What you will make of those lives of yours may depend a little upon schools and teachers, parents and friends, money and health, and many other things, but most of all upon your own wills. I wonder if you have read the life of Robert Louis Stevenson?

He had only such education as many other boys of his time had, little or no money, and very poor health. But what a deal he made of his own life and how he helped the lives of others! What a fellow he was for fun, and how he loved wisdom; a great worker and a greatly conscientious one; not satisfied unless his work was the very best that he could make it. And the reason was that he loved beauty as well as wisdom; and in his life and writings, because in his own inward

thoughts wisdom and beauty went hand in hand. I know of no better example of the full life; of a life made the most of, in the best and truest sense, with gladness and strength for itself and for the lives of others. While his body sleeps on an island mountain, overlooking the vast beauty of sky and ocean, his spirit stays with us.

The secret of the fullness of Stevenson's life was that, so far as in him lay, he left no portion of the garden of his life uncultivated. There were no waste places, every part was fruitful. He did the best that he could for his poor, weak body; kept his intellect bright with learning, his fun alert with hope, his friendships warm with sympathy; and kept his life and work sweetened and purified and strengthened by the love of beauty. He was in a high sense in love with life — his own life, the lives of others, and life in art and nature, and the abundant harvest of his garden is the love that countless men and women and children bore him and still maintain.

Such fullness of life is rare. Boys and girls, and for that matter men and women, cultivate some part of themselves, and let the rest go to waste. And the part which is most apt to be overlooked is the sense of beauty. We train our bodies and our minds, but neglect those five senses, which are just as much a part of us. It is true that men train their senses for the practical purposes of business: the watchmaker, for instance, his delicacy of touch; the tea producer, his senses of taste and smell; the mariner, his senses of sight and sound. But business, though necessary, is not everything. We do not confine the exercise of our bodies and minds to work and business, but use them also for enjoyment, and train them for this purpose. Do we not learn to swim, play hall and tennis, and practice other bodily exercises for the pure enjoyment of them? Or in our leisure moments busy our brains with study of bees, machinery, history, all kinds of difficult subjects not as work, but as a relief from work? We call them our "hobbies," and indulge them for pleasure, and find that the pleasure improves our health and spirits, and in the end even makes us do our necessary work better, and so find more pleasure in that also. For it is in what we know best and can do best that we really take most pleasure. And though life cannot be all pleasure, yet pleasure, rightly understood, should be one of the chief aims of life. And one of the chief sources of pleasure is to be found in the beauty that reaches our

minds through the senses, especially through the senses of sight and sound.

Let me illustrate in a simple way how one child will gain pleasure from her senses while another doesn't. Both have their five senses in working order — smell, taste, touch, sight, and sound — and have been in the woods gathering flowers. They reach home. One throws her handful down on a sofa, table, or chair, or the nearest bit of furniture, and goes off to do something, or it may be nothing, leaving the flowers to wither and become an untidiness. What made her gather them? Perhaps, because she is full of health and had to run about and do something; perhaps, because she has not quite gotten over the fondness that most of us had, as babies, for breaking and tearing things. It amused her to break the big stems and tear off the vines or pull up the little plants. Or possibly she was really attracted by the beauty of the flowers, but soon tired of them, and went off to other things.

Not so, however, with her companion. She spreads a paper on the table, lays out her flowers, brings one or two vases, and settles down to the pleasure of arranging them. She picks up a flower, and while she waits to decide in which vase it shall be put, see how delicately she handles it! You can tell in a moment she has a feeling of love and tenderness toward the flower. She puts it in a vase, and then her eye travels over the other flowers to decide which shall bear it company. What color, what form of flower will match best the first one? And while she is making the choice almost unconsciously she sniffs the fragrance of that spray of honeysuckle. Well, she lingers so long over the pleasure of arranging her flowers that we have not time to stay and watch the whole proceeding; but presently, when we come back, we find the vases filled and set about the room where they will look their best; this one in the dark corner with the wall behind it; another on the window sill, so that the light may shine through the petals of the flowers. And we think to ourselves what taste the girl has! For (have you ever thought of it?) we use the word taste, which originally described only the sense of tasting things with the tongue, in order to sum up a finer use of the senses of sight and sound.

And this finer use of the senses, such as Stevenson cultivated, so that his life and works are beautiful as well as wise and good, we too

may cultivate, and it is the object of this book to help us do it. I call it a guide to pictures, but I want to make it much more than that — a guide for the wonderful organs, your senses, that they may grow more and more to feel the beauty that is all about us in nature and in life, as well as in pictures and other works of art. So beauty is really our subject, beauty in nature and in art. The two are separate, though united as twin sisters.

As I write, many of you are enjoying your summer vacations, face to face with nature. The health of the mountains or the sea is in your blood; your bodies know the joy of active movement; your minds are filled with the interest of new scenes and adventures, of sports and fun with friends. But every once in a while I think it likely that your happiness is increased by something beautiful you have seen in nature. Perhaps even now, as you read these words, there comes to you the memory of some sunset, or moonlight on the water, of early morning mist creeping among the tree tops, or I know not what of nature's beauty, suddenly revealed to you because you were in the mood to receive it.

You were in the company of a friend, and you drew your arm closer through his or hers, and both were the happier for the beauty that was before you and had entered into your hearts. Or perhaps you were alone, and the eagerness came over you to make some record of your joy — in a letter to a friend or in some poem for no eyes but your own. You felt the need to give utterance to your joy in nature's beauty. You bad in you a little of the desire that stirs the artist.

And this brings us to the other kind of beauty, which is not of nature, though it is of nature's prompting — the beauty created by the artist. We are going to study the work of artists who create beauty in pictures. But do not make the mistake some people do, of thinking that it is only painters who are artists. An artist is one who fits some beautiful conception with some beautiful form of expression. His form of expression, or as we say, his art, may be sculpture, painting, or architecture; or some handicraft, as of metal or porcelain or embroidery; or it may be music, the composing of music or the rendering of it by instrument or voice; it may be acting or some forms of dancing; it may be poetry or even prose. The artist, in a word, is one who not only takes beauty into his own soul, but has the gift of art

that enables him to communicate the beauty to others by giving it a form or body. If he be a musician, he gives it a form of sound; if a painter, a form visible to the eye. It is his power of creating a form for the beauty which he feels that makes him an artist. And in its various forms — poetry, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, and the rest — art is man's highest expression of his reverence for and joy in beauty.

CHAPTER 2
Art and Her Twin Sister, Nature

A Work of Art Is Distinguished by Selection

In the previous chapter we talked about beauty, and noted that there were two kinds — beauty in nature and beauty in art. Let us now look a little more closely into this distinction, so that we may grasp the idea of what a work of art is.

Since what the painter puts onto his canvas is visible to the eye, it will generally represent or suggest some form in nature. So the painter is a student of nature. But not in the same way as the botanist who studies the forms of trees and plants which grow above the ground, or the geologist who explores the secrets of the earth below the ground. These we call scientists or scientific students, because the object of their study is exact knowledge of nature. They address themselves directly to our *intellects* and teach us to know the facts of nature accurately; but the painter appeals first to our *sense of sight* and helps us to *feel* more deeply the *beauty* of the visible world.

Unless we thoroughly grasp this difference we shall never properly understand what painters try to do, nor be able properly to enjoy their pictures. So here, at the beginning of our talks together, let us look into this difference.

We have said that the painter represents or suggests some form in nature. Sometimes he represents the actual appearance of nature, as when he paints a portrait or a landscape. At other times he suggests the possible appearance of things, which he has never seen but only imagines, as the old Italian painters did when they made pictures of St. George, killing the dragon, or of Christ in the manger, with a choir of angels hovering above. They had never seen a dragon, but from their study of the lizard, which in hot countries like Italy may constantly be seen basking on the hot rocks or darting away at your approach, they imagined a form and painted it so that it suggests an

actual creature. So, for their angels, they studied the forms and movement of children, as they ran and played, with hair and skirts streaming in the wind; also the wings and the flight of birds, and the appearance of the sky. Mature was, as it still remains, the artist's teacher. Just in what way he learns of her and uses her lessons, I am going to try and show you. But first let me remind you that nature and art, though so close together that I have called them twin sisters, are quite separate. I do so because many people confuse them together. Frequently you will hear a person say of some view of nature that it is "beautiful as a picture." Well, very likely it is, but as we shall see, not in the same way. Or some one will exclaim, as he stands in front of a picture, "It looks like nature." So it does; and yet it is not really like nature. Why both these remarks are in a small way true, but in the big sense not true, we shall discover, I hope, presently. Meanwhile, suppose we lay the book aside and look out of the window.

Are you living in the country or city? In either case you are looking out at nature, as the painter understands the word. For, while we who are not painters, when we talk of nature, have in mind the earth and sky and water, and the living things that move therein, as beasts, birds, and fishes, and the forms that live but do not move, trees and flowers and seaweed, for example, and also the chief of living and moving creatures — man; the painter uses the word nature in a wider sense. With him it means everything outside himself, so that it includes things made by man: streets, buildings, chairs, and tables — the thousand and one objects that man's brain and handiwork have fashioned out of the materials of nature.

But you are waiting at the window, looking out, perhaps, upon a street — a row of buildings, many people on the sidewalks, carriages and carts, passing before your eyes; or else into the garden of your country home, with its trees and shrubs and flowers, and possibly a view of fields and hills and woods. In each case the woodwork of the window frames in the view. Move slowly backward and you will notice that the view grows smaller and smaller; advance again and the view spreads out farther and farther; step to the left and some of the view on that side disappears, but you will see more toward the other side. Imagine for a moment that the woodwork of the window

is a picture frame and you are deciding how much of the outside view you will include in the picture. If you own a kodak and are in the habit of taking pictures, you move the camera or your position until the image in the "finder" seems to be about what you wish to photograph. Whether you thus use the "finder" or the window frame, you are selecting a bit of nature for a picture.

This should make clear to you one of the differences between nature and art. Nature extends in every direction all round the artist, an unending panorama from which he selects some little portion to form the subject of his work of art. But he carries his selection still farther, for even in the part of nature that he has selected there is so much more than he could ever put into his picture. Take another look out of the window. What a mass of details the whole presents! And, if we fix our eye on any one of its parts, it also is made up of a number of details. It would be impossible for the artist to paint them all. And so, also, if your view from the window is a country scene and you look at one object, that elm, for example. Do you think it would be possible for an artist to paint all the scales of the bark, all the spreading limbs, much less all the little branches and twigs and the countless leaves?

As the artist cannot possibly paint everything, he must choose or select what he will leave out and what he will put in. Once more, the characteristic of art is *selection*, while that of nature is abundance. We talk of nature's prodigality; we say that she is prodigal of her resources, flinging them around as a prodigal or wasteful man flings around his money. You know, for example, how the dandelion scatters its seeds broadcast over the lawn; how the daisies spread over the fields until the farmer calls them the "white weed"; how the woods become choked with undergrowth and the trees overhead crowd one another with their tangle of branches. The lawns and fields must be continually weeded; the woods cleared and thinned. Man, in fact, when he brings nature under the work of his hand, is continually selecting what he shall weed out and what he shall let remain. And so the artist with the work of his hand — his work of art.

Suppose we make believe that we are watching an artist as he begins his work of selection. The one over there, sitting under a big, white umbrella with his easel in front of him, will serve our turn. If

he will let us look over his shoulder, we shall see that with a few strokes of charcoal upon his canvas he has already selected how much of the wide view in front of him he will include in his picture. It finishes, you see, on the right with a bit of that row of trees that stand against the sky, and on the left with that small bush, so that in between is a little bit of the winding road, with a meadow beyond dotted with cows. He has squeezed some of the paint from the tubes on to his palette, and takes up his brushes. Now watch him "lay in," as he would say, "the local colors"; that is to say, the general color of each locality or part of the scene.

The general color of the sky is a faint blue; of the trees on the right, a grayish green; of the bush on the left, a deeper green; of the meadow, a yellowish green, while that of the road is a pinkish brown, for the soil of this part of the country, we will suppose, is red clay. All these local colors he lays in, covering each part with a flat layer of paint so that his canvas now presents a pattern of colored spaces. Yet already it begins to "look like something." We can see, as it were, the ground plan, on which the artist is going to build up his picture. But now he must stop, for his paints are mixed with oils and take some time to dry, and he cannot work over the paint while it is sticky.

A few days later we pay him another visit. He has been busy in our absence; the picture looks to us to be finished, and we begin to compare it with the natural scene in front of us. In nature those trees on the right stand so sharply against the sky that we can count their branches. Evidently the artist hasn't, for in his picture he has left out a great many of them; indeed, he has put in only a few of the more prominent ones. See, too, how he has painted the trees; he hasn't put in a single leaf. Instead he has represented the foliage in masses, lighter in some parts where the sun strikes, darker in the shadows. When we compare his trees with the real ones, they are not a bit the same, and yet the painted ones look all right; we can see at once that they are maples and in a general way very like the real ones.

The artist hears us talking, and he says: "My business, you see, is not to make real trees; that's nature's business; I'm a maker of pictures, and in them I only suggest that the trees are real. I try to make you feel that these are maple trees" — and he points to that part of the picture with his brush — "and I hope also to make you feel their

beauty. I don't give you an imitation of nature, but a suggestion of nature's truth.

"Now see," he says, "how I have painted those cows: just a few dabs of brownish red and black and white, showing against the green of the grass. Do they suggest cows to you?" "Yes," we say in chorus.

"Well, I hope they do," he replies, "and that you don't say 'yes' merely to please me. But if you had never seen a cow would you know from these dabs what a cow is really like?

"I am sure you wouldn't," he goes on without waiting for an answer; "and if the farmer gave me a commission to paint his favorite prize cow, I am sure he wouldn't be satisfied with these dabs. And I should not blame him. No, in that case I should place the cow where I could study it closely: the long, straight line of the back, the big angle of the hips, the strong-ribbed carcass, and its covering of glossy hair, the mild liquid eyes, and damp nose. These and a great deal more I should paint, if I were near the cow. But look at those cows over yonder. They are a long way off, and consequently look very small. I can't see in them the different points that I know a cow has; to my eyes from where I sit they look as I have painted them. For an artist does not paint what he knows to be there, but what he can see from here.

"Look," he continues, picking up a tiny pointed brush. "See what happens, when I paint what I know to be there!" And with quick, deft strokes he proceeds to sharpen the lines of the back of one of his cows in the picture, and give her four very decided legs; to hang a tail; and give her horns; and titivate the head, put in an eye and make the tongue curl round the muzzle.

"Why, it looks like a toy cow!" we exclaim. And so it does.

And now, instead of intruding any longer on our artist friend's time, let us see where our visit to him has brought us.

We have noted that one difference between nature and art is, that nature is inexhaustible in her effects, and that an artist selects from her only some little part to make his work of art. Secondly, that he does not paint the whole of what he has selected, but out of it again selects certain parts; sufficient not to imitate the original, but to suggest its appearance. Thirdly, that natural truth is not the same as artistic truth; that while the scientific man studies one thing at a

time so that he may know what is there, the artist tries to obtain an impression of the whole scene, and paints each part of it, not as he knows it to be, but as he can see it from his fixed position.

By this time you can better understand that to say of nature "It is as beautiful as a picture," is a loose way of talking. Nature is beautiful in the endless variety of its effects; a picture, for the one or two effects, choicely selected by the artist. And to say of a picture that it looks like nature is equally inaccurate, for the artist does not imitate nature but suggests it, which, as we have seen, is a very different thing.

However, I should tell you, that some painters do imitate nature. I have seen a picture in which the painter had represented a five-dollar bill, pinned on a board, and so accurately had he imitated the bill and the board that, until you were close to them and passed your hand over the flat canvas, you would not know it was a picture. And there is a story told of a Greek painter, Zeuxis, that he once imitated a bunch of grapes so exactly, that the birds flew down and pecked at it.

But, although it is a fact that a great many people think this exact imitation of nature a very fine thing, they do so because they have not seen many pictures or found out what a work of art really is. I am inclined to think that, by the time you have finished this book, if not sooner, you will look upon such examples of skill and patience as labor in vain, so far as art is concerned.

It is all very well for the *conjurer* to boast that the quickness of his hand deceives your eye. But the aim of the artist is not deception.

CHAPTER 3
Nature is Haphazard: Art is Arrangement

We have seen that the characteristic of nature is abundance, while that of art is selection. Now let us note another difference between the two — nature is haphazard, art is arrangement.

I do not forget that nature works by laws; that the workings of nature are not accidental, but the result of certain causes which produce certain effects; so that the operations of nature produce an endless chain of cause and effect. Thus in the fall, because the sap flows downward in the tree, the fiber of the leaf's stalk is gradually weakened, until the leaf by degrees loses its hold on the branch, and, because everything obeys the law of gravitation, falls to the ground. But where will it fall? That may depend upon the force and direction of the wind. It may happen that the wind is from the north or from the west; that its breath is soft, or that it blows a gale. I say it "may happen" so or so; for this is our habit of speech. When we don't understand the cause from which an effect springs, we use the word "happen," as if the affair were an accident or chance.

But a scientific man would say that such words as "accident" and "chance" are inaccurate, and would tell us why the wind was blowing from a certain direction at a certain moment, and tell us why it was soft or fierce. And yet, why should the tiny leaf have been ready to let go just at the moment when the breeze came? Upon what particular spot will the dandelion seed, after floating far in the air, alight? We may believe that the moment and the place are controlled by one Great Mind to whom everything is plain. But to our finite minds, whose capacity to understand is limited, such things are not plain. They seem to us like chance, and their results appear to our eyes haphazard.

Compare, for example, the appearance of nature with that of a well-kept garden. The latter has straight paths, intersecting one another; trim borders with rows of lettuces and radishes; separate plots,

reserved for peas, com, spinach, potatoes, and other crops. Even the straggling vines of the cucumbers are kept within certain bounds. Everywhere is an appearance of order and arrangement, beside which the tangle of growth in the woods, or even the dotting of trees on the hillside, seems haphazard. Or look out into the street, which, as you remember, in the painter's sense of the word is a part of nature. The city authorities have laid out the lines of the street, but the buildings vary in size and style; each one according to what happened to be the need and the taste of the man who built it. And the appearance of the sidewalk and roadway will vary from day to day and hour to hour, according to what may be the number and the character of the people and of the vehicles, as they happen to move or stand still. Compared with that garden, the appearance of the street is haphazard.

Compare two parlors. One is a medley of furniture and bric-a-brac, of all sorts of sizes and shapes and colors, picked up at auction sales, or in the shops, each because it happened to be a bargain or to strike a moment's whim, and then set in the parlor where there happened to be room for it. The other parlor, on the contrary, shows signs of order and arrangement. There are fewer objects in it, and they have been carefully chosen and arranged for the double purpose of making the room comfortable and agreeable to the eye. It is an illustration of good taste in *selection* and *arrangement*.

The haphazard of nature we enjoy. But the confusion of the parlor distresses us, if we have any sense of selection and arrangement. This sense the artist possesses in a marked degree, and on it he bases the making of his picture.

We have already noticed how he selects, but may have to mention it again in describing how he arranges, since the two acts are mixed up together, as when you select some flowers and then arrange them in a vase.

When we first made the acquaintance of the artist in the previous chapter, he had already, you will remember, "roughed in" with his charcoal the objects he was going to paint. We were so interested in what he had selected, that we paid little attention to the arrangement of the objects. It is this that we are now going to study.

His canvas is on the easel, its bare white surface inclosed within the four sides. He is going to fill this space, not only for the purpose

of suggesting to us the appearance of the scene he has selected, but in such a way that the actual arrangement of the objects — the pattern which they make upon the canvas — shall give us pleasure. This he calls his composition. The word, as you know, if you have studied Latin, means simply "putting" or "placing together." But, as the artist uses it, it always means that the placing together shall produce an effect that is *pleasing to the eye*. It is only when it does, that the result can properly be called a work of art. For you will recall what we said in the first chapter, that the artist is one who fits his conception with a beautiful form. And this form is his composition.

Now, before we go any farther with the artist's method of composition, let me invite you to do a little composing on your own account. That wall in your special room or den where you hang your favorite photographs — how is it arranged? Are the photographs pinned up higgledy-piggledy, so as to crowd as many as possible on the wall? Is your only idea just to hang them up where you can see them? Or have you placed them together in such a way that their actual arrangement, as they spot the open space of your wall, is agreeable to your eye? For, in a way, your wall, before you hung the photographs, was like the bare canvas of the artist. The four edges inclosed it; the space is yours to do with it what you wish.

Suppose, now, that you are starting with the wall bare. Your family has moved into a new house, or the old one is being repaired. There is your plaster wall, as white as the artist's canvas. You are allowed to decide what shall be done with it. What will you do with it?

Oh! you are going to choose a paper. Well, what shall it be? Yes, pretty, of course. But pretty by itself, or when your pictures are hung? For, if you choose a paper with a large pattern of many bright colors, it may interfere with the effect of the pictures. You don't wish to do this? Then it will be well to choose a paper that is not too prominent; one that has a small pattern, or none at all, only a single tint. Some people prefer a neutral tint; one, that is to say, which is neither one thing nor the other; not very green, or blue, or red, or yellow, but rather so; some color that is difficult to define. For, because this paper does not attract particular attention, it allows the photographs, hung upon it, to show up more prominently.

However, the papering is your affair, and you have made your selection. At last the workmen, their ladders, their paste pots, and shavings are cleared out of the room and you can begin to arrange it. You have placed the furniture where it best fits in, looks best, and seems most comfortable, and now you turn your attention to each of the four walls. Once more, is the placing of the photographs to be higgledy-piggledy, "any-old-how," just to show them, or are you going to arrange them carefully, so as to make each wall a pleasing composition?

We will suppose you decide upon the latter plan. How will you proceed? I can imagine you choosing one of two ways.

Either you will select your biggest picture, or the one you prize most, and place it in the middle of the wall, and then place the others on each side of it, so as to balance one another. Or, you will feel that such an arrangement would be too stiff and formal, too obviously balanced, and will sprinkle the pictures over the wall space, so that their arrangement is irregular and looks as if it were accidental, and yet seems balanced. For, if you are trying to arrange your pictures in the way in which they seem to you to look best, consciously or unconsciously you are working to secure a balance.

Yes, one of the principles of artistic composition is balance. Like all the principles, adapted by artists, it is founded on an instinct of human nature. Have you ever noticed that when a man carries a bucket of water, he holds the free arm away from his body? He does it by instinct, to offset the drag of the bucket on his other arm and to balance his body. Have you ever walked upon the steel rail of a railroad track? Most of us have, I imagine. We tread pretty firmly for a little while, and then we totter. Out go our arms immediately to restore our balance. We walk up and down the deck of an ocean liner, when the sea is rough, and slope our bodies to the movement of the vessel. Why? To keep our balance. If we lose it we are hurled across the deck in a very undignified fashion. On the contrary, what a beautiful spectacle is presented when a good skater balances backward and forward; perhaps an even more beautiful one, when a good dancer who feels the joy of movement sways to the rhythm of the music.

So, to maintain a balance is an instinct of human nature; to lose

it produces ugly results; while beautiful ones may be secured from it, especially if the balance is rhythmic.

Another principle, then, of artistic composition is rhythm, and this, too, is founded on an instinct of human nature. Let us see what rhythm is. A small boy has found an old pot, catches up a stick, and begins to belabor the pot and make himself a nuisance. By and by he gets tired of his own noise, imagines his pot a drum, and hits it with rhythmic strokes, one following the other in measured beats. Watch how his legs begin to move to the time of the strokes, and how the other youngsters fall in behind him. Left, right, left, right, on they march; their legs and shoulders swinging to the rhythmic beat. I wonder if they know they are following an instinct, pretty nearly as old as humanity. Probably they don't, and wouldn't care if they did. All they know is that they are having a good time. That's just it! And they are having the same sort of good time that the primitive man gave his friends, when he first hit on the idea of clapping his hands together in rhythm. Later on he found he could get more stirring effects and save his hands by rhythmic hammering of one piece of wood upon another. Then came along a primitive Edison who perfected the principle and put tom-toms on the market. And so, in time, music came to be invented. For the basis of music and of the pleasure that is received from it is its measured beat or rhythm.

It is, however, not only from the actual measured beat, appealing to our ear, that we gain pleasure, but also from the suggestion of rhythm to our sense of sight.

A man stone deaf can enjoy watching a dance. He has never heard a sound in his life, but his sense of sight is stirred to pleasure by the spectacle of measured repetition of the movements. Similarly, the measured repetitions of stationary objects gives us pleasure — the measured repetition, for example, presented by the West Point cadets, as they suddenly halt, either in close formation or in open ranks. "How beautiful!" we exclaim. And it is because the Athenians realized the beauty of measured repetition and the pleasure that it gives to the sense of sight, that they surrounded their great temple, the *Parthenon*, with ranks of columns, arranged at equal distance from one another. For, though they may have learned the beauty of repetition from studying the tree stems in the woods, yet, when they built

their work of art, they avoided the haphazard of nature, and introduced order and arrangement by making the repetitions measured.

Behind the columns, however, high up on the outside of the temple wall they set a frieze or band of figures. It extended clear around the temple, representing a procession of people on their way to the great festival of the goddess Athene. The remains are now in the British Museum; but, doubtless, you have seen casts of portions of it, and will recall some in which young men are riding, the head of each horse overlapping the body of the one in front of it. There is here no longer an actual measured repetition, as in the case of the columns. The bodies are not separated by exact intervals, nor do they repeat the same forms. The youths differ, so do the horses, and the actions of the forms are dissimilar. And yet the arching of the horses' necks, the prancing of the forelegs, and the bodies of the youths swaying to the movement of the horses are so arranged, that there is no break or interruption or confusion, but the whole seems to flow up and down regularly. There are no actual, measured intervals or actual repetitions, yet the feeling of both is suggested. The arrangement of the forms is rhythmic, in that it suggests rhythm. And the principle of this also the Greeks found in nature, as you may, if you watch the waves rolling shoreward.

But all this while the artist's canvas is standing white and bare upon the easel, and must continue to stand. For, when he gets to work, I want you, not only to see what he does, but feel the meaning of his intention. And we can best enter into another person's feeling, if we have experienced something of his feeling in ourselves. So, I have rummaged among our own experiences, in order to make you feel how much we have in common with the artist. He and ourselves are creatures of like nature, with similar senses, similar sources of pleasure and pain, and similar instincts leading us to do and to like similar things. Only the artist has keener senses, and has cultivated his instincts and study of nature, and has drawn from them certain practical hints to help him create his work of art.

Among the instincts that we share with him are, as I have tried to show — first, an instinctive preference for order and arrangement; secondly, the need of balance and the pleasure we receive from it; thirdly, the increased pleasure we derive from balance, when it is

accompanied with rhythmic repetitions. These are the principles on which he relies when he makes his composition. For let me repeat, and not for the last time, that the purpose of his composition is not only to suggest some scene of nature, but to make the composition itself a source of pleasure to our sense of sight.

CHAPTER 4
Contrast

In the previous chapter we discussed balance and repetition as elements of composition. We have now to study another element — that of contrast. This also results from a natural love of change and variety. How sick we should get of candy, if we had nothing else to eat! how tired of sunshine, if there were never a cold or wet day to make the sun seem extra beautiful by contrast! "Jack," as we know, "will become a dull boy," if his studies are not enlivened by play; but how worse than dull — stupid and ill-tempered — if his play were not relieved by something serious. Yes, contrast is the salt of life, without which living would be tasteless and insipid. More than this, I can hardly believe that a boy or girl can grow up to be brave and true, a really fine specimen of manhood or womanhood, unless some shadow of hardship and pain has passed over the sunny period of youth. We have to learn to take the bitter with the sweet, and it is through meeting each, as it comes along, as a part of the day's work, that we gradually build up character.

So contrast, it seems, serves two purposes in life — it adds to the pleasure of life, and it gives force and worth to character. Its effects in art are very similar. The artist employs it to give variety and at the same time character and distinction to the pattern of his compositions.

You can find out for yourselves how he does this, if you take a piece of paper, a pencil, a pair of compasses, and a straight-edge. First draw a rectangle. This is the space to he filled or developed into a composition. Now draw a vertical line up the center of it. You will admit that this is not interesting by itself; but cut it at right angles with a horizontal line, and immediately the figure begins to have some character. Immediately, also, if you have any eye for balance — and almost everybody has — you will begin to notice that it makes a great difference at just what point the horizontal line cuts the

vertical. In the first place, whether the arms of the horizontal are or are not the same length — then, at how high or how low a point on the vertical line they branch out. You can experiment with these two lines until the cross seems to you to look its best.

You could not draw anything much simpler than this figure; and yet it is sufficient to illustrate two principles of contrast in composition — first, that the contrast is interesting, and second, that it is made more interesting, when the contrasted parts are carefully balanced. Now take the compasses and, centering on the point of intersection of the two lines, describe a circle. The latter will introduce into the figure a still further contrast between curved and straight lines. And again your sense of balance will be brought into play. How far will you make your circle extend? It is for you to say, because you are trying to satisfy your own feeling for what will look best. Now, as a contrast to this circle, add four smaller ones at the extremities of the cross. Next, from the center of the big circle draw radiating lines. As a last touch of contrast, suppose you draw a segment of a circle in each of the four corners of the rectangle.

By this time we have built up a composition, the pattern of which consists of contrasts. But, as I dare say you have noticed, it also consists of repetitions. And once more I will remind you that both the repetitions and the contrasts are balanced. Contrast, repetition, and balance — these are the simple elements of composition.

Our pattern or composition is a very simple form of geometric figure. If you feel disposed, you can amuse yourself by devising other kinds of simple patterns; starting, for example, with a circle inside your rectangular space; or, selecting, to begin with, a circular frame and starting with a triangle or square inside of it, and in either case continuing to build up or embroider your design with additional features. In this way by varying the shape of your original frame and the character of the pattern that you put in it, you can go on indefinitely inventing designs. All these, I want you to observe, are geometric in character. They are based upon the figures which you find in geometry — the square, rectangle, triangle, and circle.

Now just as the acorn may in time become the great oak tree, so this simple basis of geometric design is at the root of the compositions of the great Italian pictures and of thousands of other pictures, even

to our own day. Their compositions are based upon a geometric plan. The only difference is that your plan is clearly visible, while theirs is more or less disguised. The reason is that they do not fill their spaces, as you did, with simple lines, but with forms — figures, columns, buildings, draperies, trees, hills, and so on. Consequently, when we speak of the "lines" of their compositions, we often mean rather the direction which the figure, or the object whatever it may be, takes. Thus, a standing figure may take the place of your vertical line; the slightly undulating top of the hills behind it may correspond to your horizontal line; a curving group of angels, floating in the air, may suggest your circle; while your diagonal line may be replaced in the picture by the branches of a tree that spread in a diagonal direction. In other words, what you have done (shall I say?) stiffly with compasses and straight-edge, the artists do freely and loosely. Yet, I repeat it, underneath this seeming freedom, if you search for it, you will find the basis of a geometric design. This I hope to show you in the following chapter. Meanwhile, there is another use for contrast that you should know.

It is the contrast between the light and the dark parts of a picture. It is employed, in the first place, to make the objects in the picture look more real. If you fix your eyes on any object in the room or out of doors, you will observe that some parts of it are light and some dark, and that there are various degrees of lightness and darkness. It is the light on an object that enables us to see it. If there were no light on it — if it were in complete darkness, that is to say — nothing would be visible. And, while it is the light that enables us to see the object, it is the degree of light on some parts of it and the various degrees of darkness on others that enable us to realize the shape of it. In other words, the contrast of light and dark, received by the eyes, communicates to our brain the sense of form and bulk.

That it should do so seems to be the gradual result of a habit, unconsciously acquired. Those who study such things tell us that we began to perceive things, not through the sense of sight, but by the sense of touch. The baby reaches out its little hand to feel for the mother's breast; it burrows its way to her warm body; is comforted by the feel of her arms around it. When the child is older and you present her with a doll, you may be disappointed that she does not at

once show pleasure. Instead of her face lighting up with joy, as you hoped it would, she stares at the doll in rather a dull way. But presently she stretches out her hands, and takes the doll into them and begins to feel it all over, and at length clasps it in her arms against her body. It is by the sense of touch that she seems to have assured herself that the doll is "real." When she is older, however, if you offer her a new doll, immediately her face lightens with gladness of welcome. For, in the meantime she has learned to know a doll by sight, and now when she gets it into her hands she turns it round and round that she may look at it, patting the face, however, and the dress, and lifting up the lace of the petticoats and handling the sash, because, although she has grown to recognize things by her sense of sight, she has not lost her delight in the sense of touch. Nor will she, I hope, as she grows older. Indeed, artists, knowing how much pleasure people derive from the feel of things, take great pains, as we shall see in another chapter, to paint the surfaces, or, as they suggest it, the *texture* of objects, in such a way as to make us feel how pleasant it would be to touch them. Besides, it makes the figure seem so much more real, if they suggest to us that, if we touched the face, it would feel like flesh; or, if we could pass our hand over the dress, it would seem soft and mossy like velvet, or smooth and polished like satin.

But, to return to the contrast of light and dark. Although it is by this contrast that we get an impression of the form or bulk of an object, most people are not aware of the fact. They have grown up in the habit of recognizing things by sight, without being conscious of how they do so. They just see things. Artists, however, have had to learn the reason and how to apply it to painting.

The history of modern painting extends back about six hundred years. In the thirteenth century, the paintings which decorated some of the churches in Italy were painted in what is called a conventional way. That is to say, a certain custom was followed by all the painters. They represented the heads and hands of their figures, but the bodies were covered with draperies, under which there was little or no suggestion of any form or bulk. For the whole figure appeared flat. It was as if you should make a little figure of clay or paste, and then pass a roller over it, until its thickness is flattened down into nothing but length and breadth. The figures, in fact, gave no appearance of being

real and lifelike because, as artists would say, there was no drawing in them. There was nothing to suggest that the figures had real bodies.

By degrees, however, people grew tired of these unlifelike figures, and a painter named Giotto (1266?-1337) became the leader of a new motive in painting. It was simply to try and make the figures look real and the scenes in which they appeared seem natural. Instead of following a convention, he used his eyes and studied nature. He was no longer satisfied to fill in the background of his picture with a flat gold tint as the conventional painters had done. He wished to increase the reality of his figures by representing them in real surroundings, sometimes in a room, sometimes out of doors. Instead of being content to make his pictures flat, representing only length and breadth, he set to work to create the suggestion of the third dimension — depth. He would try and make you feel that you could walk from the foreground of his picture, step by step, through to the background; and that, as you reached each figure or object in the scene, you could pass your hand round it and feel that it had real bulk. I said "step by step" and I lay stress on it. For what Giotto tried to represent was not merely some figures in front and then a big gap that you had to jump over before you reached the background, but what the artists call the "successive planes" of the scene — the step-by-step appearance of the scene.

Perhaps you will grasp better what this means if, when you next go to the theater, you carefully observe the scenery, representing some outdoor effect. On each side of the stage, very likely representing tree trunks, there is a series of "wings," one behind another at a distance of say five feet, while across the stage, hanging down from the "flies," is a series of cut cloths, representing foliage, that correspond with the wings and seem to be branches of the tree trunks. Well, these cloths and their wings correspond to the "successive planes" of a picture. They lead gradually back and you can actually walk in and out of them. But, when you reach the back cloth, you are stopped, so far as your legs are concerned. If you are sitting in. the auditorium, however, your eye goes traveling on and on a long distance, for the back cloth is itself a picture, in which there is an *illusion* of successive planes.

The artist's word for representing the successive planes is

perspective. If you stand between the rails of a trolley line or railroad and look along it, the lines seem to draw together or converge. Yet in reality you know that they are equidistant from each other all the way along. But, since our power of seeing becomes less and less as objects are farther removed from us, so to our diminishing sight the size and distinctness of the space between the rails appears also to diminish. In the same way you will observe that the width of the street seems to diminish, and the people and wagons appear smaller and smaller, according as they are seen farther and farther back in the successive planes. The houses, too — you know that if you stood in front of any of the houses, exactly facing it, the upright sides would appear to be, as they are, of equal height, and that the windows and cornice would appear in parallel horizontal lines. Yet, as you stand in the street and look along the houses on either side, they present a different appearance. In the case of each house the upright side, nearer to you, seems higher than the one farther off, and the rows of windows and the line of the cornice appear to slope downward. For the houses as they take their places in the receding or successive planes seem to diminish in size.

This, you see, is another example of what we have already said, that the artist does not paint what he knows to be facts, but the appearances, as he sees them from the point where his eyes are — his "point of sight." You remember how in an earlier chapter that artist represented, or rather suggested the cows in the distance by a few dabs. That was how he saw them from his point of sight. I could not tell you then, but you will understand now, that he was obeying the law of perspective, and was representing the cows as they appeared in their own proper plane of the scene. Do you remember that when he drew in their horns and tails and other details, they looked like toy cows? We can now see why. They contradicted their surroundings; they no longer were at home in their own plane; their plane was a good way off, but they were represented as if close to our eyes; and, as we saw how small they were, they seemed to us like toy cows.

You see, it is entirely a matter of how things look to the eyes. The painter, as I have said, does not represent the facts as he knows them to be, but the impressions which the facts make upon his eyesight; and these impressions, by the way in which he renders them, he hands

on to us. His picture is not nature, but a suggestion or illusion of nature.

Now, although Giotto had discovered that, to make you feel that you could walk back through his pictures, he must represent the successive planes, he only partly found out how to do it. It was not until nearly a hundred years later that a painter named Masaccio learned how to fill the whole of his picture with a suggestion of atmosphere, so that the objects took their places properly in their proper planes, and it was still later before artists thoroughly worked out the methods of perspective.

The greatest difficulty that they had to surmount was how to "foreshorten" their figures, or represent them in "foreshortening." A simple way of understanding what this means is to stand in front of a mirror and stretch out your arms to left and right, like the arms of a cross. Each extends a long way. But now bring them in front of you and stretch them toward the mirror. At once they look shorter, or at any rate you cannot see their length. They appear foreshortened. Or you may practice a still more "violent" example of foreshortening, if you are able to place the mirror where you can see your body, when lying down with the feet toward it, for now the whole length of the body appears foreshortened in the mirror. The surface of the latter, you observe, corresponds exactly with the surface of a picture. It is a flat plane upon which is produced the appearance of successive or receding planes, and though you cannot see the length of your body because it is foreshortened, you are made to feel its length.

It was a long time before artists overcame the difficulty of representing this effect; and the first pictures in which it was accomplished were naturally regarded as wonders. Since it is not the purpose of this book to teach you to draw I will mention only one of the principles involved. It is the one we have already been discussing — the contrast of light and dark, or, as it is called, "chiaroscuro." Artists soon discovered that, if an object has bulk, that part of it which is nearest to the light will reflect most light; the parts less near, less light; while the parts that are exposed to no light will appear dark. As this was how the artists saw the objects, it was so they tried to represent them. They learned to "model" the object, that is to say, to represent it as having bulk, by reproducing in their pictures the contrasts of light

and dark. At first the contrasts were crude, chiefly of the very light and very dark, but by degrees the artists became more skillful and learned to represent also all the varying gradations of less light and less dark. By this time they were better able to surmount the difficulty of foreshortening.

You will see how, if you will again stand in front of the mirror and stretch out one arm toward it. The simplest test is made, if you can arrange that the light shall be directly at your back, for then it is reflected by the mirror on to the front of you. In this case you will notice that your outstretched hand receives the most light, because it is nearest to the light. If it were represented in this way in a picture, our habit of seeing the highest or brightest light on the highest or most directly exposed surface of an object would make us feel that the hand projected in front of the body.

If, however, you stand before the mirror with light falling upon you from one side, the picture in the mirror will be quite different in appearance. The light and shadow will be more broken up and diversified. Some part of your hand, it may be simply the edges of the fingers, will catch a high light, even if it is not the highest; and light probably will fall on your forearm, between the wrist and elbow, and again upon the upper part of the arm. Broadly speaking, your arm presents three planes of form — the hand, the forearm, and the upper arm. And, though to your untrained eye the light on all of these planes may seem the same, to an artist's eye it would vary according to the angle at which the light hits the plane, or, as the artist himself would say, according to the angle of the plane. These angles vary all over the figure, as you may be able to see if you examine your picture in the mirror. To mention a few, in a general way, there are several angles around each of the shoulders, about the breast, round the neck, while the face, with its projecting nose, its receding eye sockets, its rounded cheeks and so on, presents a regular patchwork of angles of plane. Or shall I say, the whole figure presents a whole multitude of facets like a cut diamond? Only, unlike the diamond, its facets are uneven in size and irregular in shape. And just as the light on the facets, here very light and elsewhere not so light, informs us of the shape of the diamond, so do these differently lighted angles of plane, when presented in a picture, give us the suggestion of the figure's

shape.

And now study the shadows in your mirror picture. They result from the opposite of what we have been talking about. In their case the angles of plane are turned away from instead of toward the light, and some parts, such as the hollows of the folds of your dress or coat, seem to catch no light at all and to be quite dark. I expect you find it much easier to detect the various gradations of dark or shadows than those of the light. And a great many artists, especially in olden times, seem to have seen the shadows more than the lights — for they represent the former with more subtlety, that is to say, with a keener eye for variations, than they do the latter. Indeed, the subtle rendering of light is particularly an accomplishment of modern artists.

Well, if you have carefully studied your portrait in the mirror, I think you must have discovered how large a part the contrast of light and shadow plays in the appearance of the figure, and therefore, what an equally important part it plays in producing an illusion of reality in the picture. I do not forget that an artist by simply drawing an outline with a pen or pencil can also suggest to us the appearance of an object. But, if he does so, it is by the help of ourselves, for he relies on our imagination to supply what he has omitted.

Finally, before we leave the mirror portrait, I should like to ask you in which of the following ways you see it: Do you see it as a bold, simple composition of light and dark? Or are you conscious of a hundred and one little details about the clothes and face and hair and so on? The former is what artists call the "broad" way of seeing nature. Many artists see nature in this way and represent in a bold, free, broad manner simply the big general facts. Others, on the other hand, as you may be, are conscious at once of the great variety of details of which the whole is composed, and represent the subject in a highly detailed manner. Neither is *the* right nor *the* wrong way. Thousands of fine pictures have been painted in both ways. On the other hand, if you find you grow to like one way more than another, it will be because you yourself, as well as the artist, have the habit of receiving impressions in that way. Do not on that account think other people wrong for receiving impressions differently and therefore preferring the other sort of picture. We cannot help having preferences, but they shouldn't prejudice us against the preferences of others.

CHAPTER 5
Geometric Composition

In the previous chapters we talked about the elements of composition. We found that the composition or arrangement of figures and objects in the picture is designed by artists for two purposes: Firstly, to represent some subject; and, secondly, to represent it in such a way that the arrangement itself will be a source of pleasure. This second purpose is what makes the picture a work of art. And we found that the artist, in order to make his composition give pleasure to our sense of sight, relies upon the pleasure that we derive from repetition and contrast, and upon the instinct that we all have for keeping our balance. The elements of composition, in fact, are repetition and contrast in a state of balance, sometimes with the added charm of rhythm. We also found that one way in which artists contrive to make this balance of repetition and contrast is by playing, as we may say, upon the simple geometrical patterns of the rectangle, triangle, and circle.

Now let us study an actual example, and for the purpose I have chosen Raphael's *Disputá*.[1] It is painted on a wall of one of the "Stanze" or suite of rooms in the Vatican, the home of the Pope, in Rome. Raphael painted many other decorations in these rooms, but this was his first one, executed when as a young man of twenty-five he had been summoned from Florence to work for the powerful pope, Julian II. Raphael had been a pupil of Perugino, and he took one of the geometrical designs that his master had already used. The pupil, however, improved upon it.

Observe, first, the shape of the space that Raphael was called upon to decorate. It is known as a lunette or moon-shape. Now it was this space and no other, that for the time being, he had to decorate.

[1] Pronounced dees-poo-táh, with the accent on the last syllable.

What he put into it, must be suggested by, one may almost say, must grow out of, the particular shape of this space. In fact, the outside lines of the lunette, and the lines inside, must *together* form the pattern of the composition, now observe how he did it. Briefly, he put into it a number of curved lines, that would repeat the curve of the outside, and sometimes also be in contrast to it. Likewise he introduced horizontal lines, to repeat the bottom edge, and vertical ones in contrast. Let us examine it more closely.

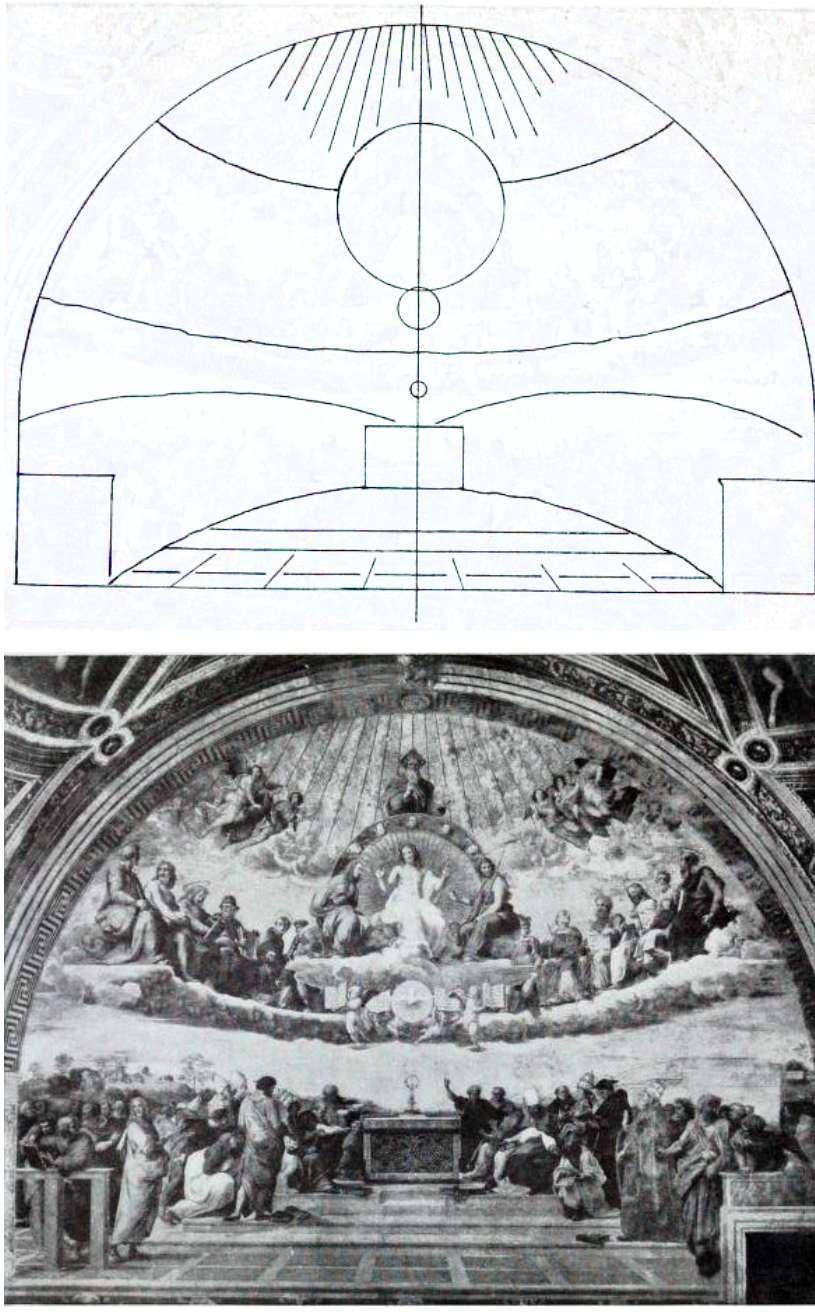
Not quite in the center but nearly so, is a small circle, on which appears a dove. This circle arrests our eye, and its effect is to make us feel very certainly that part of the composition is above it and part below. It is repeated above by a much larger circle. This is not completed; for its regularity of shape is interrupted by the two figures, seated one on each side. The circle seems to pass behind these till it merges with the clouds below. Both the small and the large circles repeat the outside curves of the lunette. On the other hand the curve of the clouds, and the figures seated upon them form a contrasting curve, and there is another one higher up, formed by the two groups of floating angels. In the center, above the larger circle, is a figure with a nimbus that points up, carrying our eye toward an imaginary center, somewhere outside the picture, from which start the radiating lines. So the impression of that part of the picture that we have been examining is of uplift. By successive steps the eye and, through it, the imagination, are invited to mount up. And now for the part below the small circle, separated from what is above by an open space of clear blue sky. Do you notice that the band of figures stretching across this part takes the form of a curve, repeating the curves of the circles but contrasted with the two important curves of cloud? Its effect is to prevent one's gaze from soaring altogether upward. This downward curve, as it were, tethers the composition to the ground firmly in the two corners. And now note that the central feature of this lower part is the altar, an equilateral, in strongest possible contrast to the curves and circles above it. That it may have still stronger emphasis, observe how its horizontal lines are repeated down to the bottom of the picture by the steps, so that the eye, as it were, mounts the steps to this central feature. Further the equilateral is again enforced and also balanced by the vertical and horizontal lines, forming a suggestion of

equilateral figures in the corners. The one on the right is actually a doorway; the black part is the door. Some artists might have felt it was a drawback to have a bit thus cut out of the picture. Not so Raphael. There, as elsewhere in these rooms, he takes the doorway into his composition and makes it serve a very useful purpose of emphasising the corner, and then invents another structure to strengthen equally the corner opposite.

Now note the radiating lines of the pavement. In a general way they repeat the radiation of the lines at the top of the picture; but they are farther apart and bolder, as befits the bolder character of the lower part. Have you discovered the point from which these lines of the pavement radiate? By using a straight edge to each in turn, you will find that all the lines, if continued would meet within the little circle of ornament that stands upon the altar. To this point also the gaze of many of the figures is directed.

Some of the figures, however, are standing so that though they gaze towards this center, the lines of their bodies lead our gaze upward as well as towards the center. Then again, beside the altar is a figure with its arm pointing upward, so that our eye and imagination are not permitted to stop at the little circle. For Raphael had to bind the lower and upper parts together and make one united composition. Very easily the stretch of the sky might have divided the whole into two parts. Lest it should, he has softened the contrast of the lower and upper curves by introducing on the one side a building, on the other a low hill with delicate trees springing upward.

Now let us pause for a moment, and observe the general effect of the lines, which we can do by turning to the skeleton drawing on transparent paper. It lays bare the plan of the composition, and we can see that it is a geometric composition of repetition and contrasts, of horizontal, vertical, diagonal and curved lines, balanced so as to unite into one single impression. To myself the impression is of looking into the interior of a circular building, with a vaulted roof. I remember just such a building in Rome; the Pantheon, built in honor of all the gods, but now, as in Raphael's time, a temple of the Church. As you enter it an altar faces you across the stretch of pavement, and the lines of the architecture, as it circles round you and above you, are very similar to these lines, while overhead the ribs or radiating



La Disputá del Sacramento, Raphael

lines of the vaulted ceiling suddenly stop, for there is a circular opening at the top, through which you can see the sky, and the light strikes down through it in diagonal shafts of light.

I wonder if Raphael had the Pantheon in mind when he composed this picture? Very likely, for he must have seen it; and he had a wonderful gift for receiving impressions and making use of them. And this building, both for its unusual shape and particularly from that wonderful opening, carrying one's imagination upward from finite space to the infinite spaciousness of sky, is peculiarly impressive. It fits in also with the conception that Raphael seems to have formed of the subject which the picture commemorates.

For the name of the picture is misleading. It does not represent a dispute or argument, as the title *Disputá* would suggest. The real subject is an allegory of the Holy Catholic Church — the Church on Earth and the Church in Heaven, the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. And it is the idea of the Church on Earth as held by the Roman Catholic Church that is represented. You may not be a Roman Catholic yourself, any more than I am, but none the less let us try to enter reverently for a few minutes into the conception of the picture, since it will help us to see how wonderfully the composition grows out of the idea.

To the Roman Catholic the highest act of worship is the service of the Mass. Here, in consequence, the altar at which it is celebrated is made the most prominent feature of the lower part of the picture. It forms, as it were, a keystone of the arch of figures; the bishops, doctors, and faithful of the Church on Earth. Their worship is directed towards the altar on which rests the receptacle in which the Sacred Bread is reserved. On earth the Church reveres the Bread as the Body of Christ; a symbol of the Body of the risen Christ in Heaven. Above the altar hovers a dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, through whom the Words of Holy Scripture make known the Glory of the Christ. The sacred books are borne by baby forms, "for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Above the symbol of the Holy Spirit, sits enthroned the Christ, with hands uplifted, showing the wounds that the nails made. On one side sits the Virgin Mother, on the other, John the Baptist, who prepared the way before Him; while to right and left is a row of Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs. Above the circle of glory appears the

figure of God the Father, with hands upraised in blessing. On either side of Him float angels and the sky is thick with baby faces of Cherubs and Seraphs, singing "Hosanna." Down through their midst descend shafts of golden light from the far off infinite Sun of Righteousness.

Whether or not Raphael had in mind the Pantheon, his rendering of the allegory far excels the grandeur even of the beautiful temple. For his own temple is composed of earth and sky. "The Earth is His Tabernacle," and the ceiling thereof the vault of the Heavens themselves. Suspended in it is the vision of the Holy Trinity, and the throngs of the heavenly hosts, whose praise and adoration are the mighty echo of the prayers and praises down below on earth.

Thus, you see, with what simple clearness Raphael grasped the idea that Pope Julian II asked him to commemorate. It is as logical as a proposition in geometry, and on simple principles of geometric design he built up the idea into a picture. How the simplicity of the idea has been elaborated with a variety of beautiful thoughts, and how the simplicity of the design of the structure has been hung, as it were, with rich embroideries of detail, I must leave you to search out for yourselves. If you do, you will find that each figure represents some example of repetition or contrast, each a separate beauty and meaning.

In conclusion I will ask you one question. Do you perceive the rhythm that prevails in this balance of repetition and contrast: how from the bottom of the composition the successive waves of pattern flow upward, as the thoughts of the Faithful mount in successive waves of prayer and adoration?

CHAPTER 6
Geometric Composition (Continued)

There is another example of geometric composition. It is also by Raphael and is painted on one of the walls in the same room that the *Disputá* decorates. But, while the latter's geometric plan was very noticeable, this one is more disguised and the whole design has a much greater appearance of freedom. It is recognised by artists as one of Raphael's most beautiful compositions, and one of the finest examples of space decoration in existence.

But before we examine the plan on which the decoration of this space has been built up, let us study the subject. It is usually called *Jurisprudence*, that is to say the principle of Law — both the making and the administering of laws. In the *Disputá* the subject, as you remember, was Religion; in two of the other panels in this same room Raphael has represented *Philosophy* and *Poetry*. Here he set himself to represent the idea of *Law*. The *idea*, you observe. In all these four panels, it is an idea, not an event or incident, that is represented; but an idea — something that has existence only in the mind. For all the subjects represent abstract ideas; ideas, that is to say, abstracted or removed from the experience of the senses. We cannot, for example, see religion or Law; nor touch, taste, smell, nor hear them. We can see the policeman on his beat, or the judge in court, or the members of the legislature — the men who, respectively, maintain, administer, and make the laws; and we can see the record of the laws in books. But the idea or principle of Law which has caused men to construct all this machinery for the making and enforcing of the laws, exists only in the mind.

Therefore, when Raphael was asked to paint the subject of *Jurisprudence* or *Law*, something that no one has ever seen or will see, what did he do? He asked himself the question: When people have a respect for Law, how does it show itself in their acts? In the first place they are very careful in the making of the laws; they found them upon

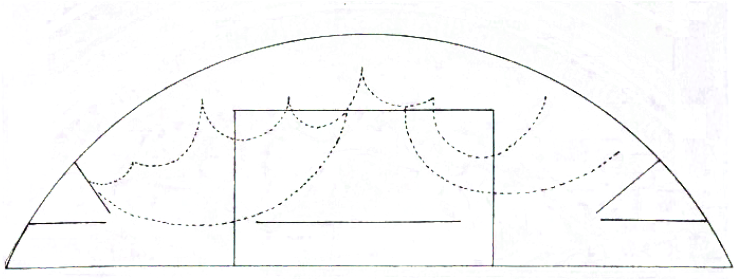
the experience of the past and shape them to fit the needs of the future; they exhibit PRUDENCE. Secondly, in the enforcing of the laws, they exhibit two qualities: FIRMNESS and MODERATION. Though they firmly uphold the law, they remember that

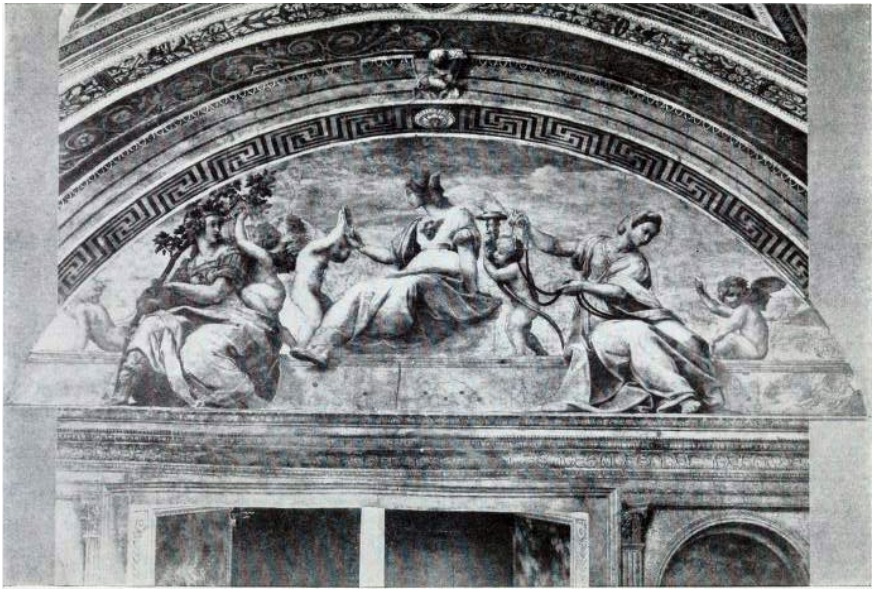
> "earthly power doth then show likest God's
> When mercy seasons justice."

Raphael, then, determined to represent the idea of Law, by representing three of its qualities: *Prudence*, *Firmness* and *Moderation*. These three again are abstract ideas. No one has ever seen them or will see them; we can only see the results of them, the acts which they influence man to do. So if *Prudence*, *Firmness* and *Moderation* have no visible shape, how could he represent them to the eye? He probably took a hint from a form of a stage play that was popular in his day. At any rate he did what the authors of these "Moralities" or "Allegories" were in the habit of doing. For they introduced as characters in their plays the Vices and Virtues; making an actor, for example, personify Gluttony or embody in his own person the idea of Gluttony. Thus, a fat man would be chosen for the part, and he would pad himself so as to look still fatter; he would make his face shining and greasy, and perhaps cover the front of his coat with grease, to suggest what a greedy and dirty feeder he was. He would come on the stage eating, and anything he had to say or do would help the audience to realise that the only thing he lived for was to stuff himself with food. This was called an embodiment or personification of Gluttony; for the idea of Gluttony was suggested in the person of the actor by the peculiarities of his body and behaviour. While the personifications of the Vices were for the most part comic, those of the virtues were beautiful or heroic, so that these Moralities or Allegories were as popular with the crowd as with people of taste. Sometimes the allegory was represented, not with figures moving about the stage, speaking and acting, but as a stationary group, in which the figures were raised on steps, so that a very imposing composition or tableau was presented. And no doubt, when these were given on a grand scale artists often arranged the spectacle.

On the other hand, the artists were not slow to adopt the same idea in their pictures. The great altarpieces and large decorations,

painted by the Italian artists of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries are to all intents and purposes allegories. Such certainly is this *Jurisprudence* of Raphael's. He has personified the three virtues of *Prudence*, *Firmness* and *Moderation*. To *Prudence* he has given two faces. One is old, for it gazes back over the long past; the other has the freshness of youth, as it peers into the future. It is looking at itself in a mirror. Why? For everything in these allegories is intended to convey a meaning to the minds of the spectators. Perhaps there are two reasons. The face is gazing at the reflection of itself, as it now is; for *Prudence*, besides taking note of the past and looking toward the future, must know the present. Again, since a mirror reflects what is in front of it and shows us our face as others see it, it was used by the





Jurisprudence, Raphael

artists as an emblem of Truth. And to know the truth is wisdom, and to act according to truth and wisdom is prudence. So, when you see a figure holding the emblem of the mirror, you may be sure the artist is personifying the idea of Truth, or Wisdom, or Prudence, or all three combined.

On the bosom of *Prudence* is a winged head; perhaps intended for the head of Medusa, which turned to stone every one who looked at it. If so, it is an emblem here of the terribleness of *Prudence*, when offended. She is gentle in herself, but a terror to evil doers. At her side a baby form holds a torch. This was used as the emblem of that which enlightens the world — Learning; and suggests here that *Prudence* is illuminated by learning, perhaps also, that truth and wisdom and prudence are themselves lights which lighten the darkness of the world.

The figure to the right of the Torch-bearer offers *Prudence* a bit and reins. It is with these that men control horses; so they were adopted by painters as an emblem of control; and, knowing this, we recognise that the woman who holds them is intended to personify *Moderation*. Her whole bearing suggests modesty, which is a form of moderation, for both words imply that a person has the sense to know how far it is right to go, and where it is fit to stop.

But note the figure of the woman on the right. She is of powerful build, seated in a positive sort of attitude that has nothing of the gentle retiring character of the other figures. She is a personification of *Firmness*, armed for defense, with helmet, cuirass, and greaves. But, though she carries no weapon of offense, she holds in leash one of those pumas with which the ancients used to hunt big game. She will, if necessary, pursue and pull down the law's transgressors. Meanwhile she bears an oak branch, the emblem of strength and victory in civil life, as opposed to the laurel of war, for her victories are those of peace. The little Cupids, or *Amorini*, as the Italians call them, except the two who carry the mirror and torch, are put in simply to increase the beauty of the composition.

I have dwelt first upon the subject of this decoration, because it is a key to so many of the old paintings and to many modern ones as well. Their subjects represent abstract ideas personified, embodied in human form; the particular idea being shown by the emblems which

accompany each figure. People had come to recognise that such and such an emblem indicated such and such an idea, and, whenever a painter wished to suggest that idea, he represented a figure with the familiar emblem.

Now, too, that we have grasped the meaning of this allegory of Raphael's we can better enter into his manner of representing it. Since the idea is an abstract one, he has expressed it in an abstract way. That is to say, he has not attempted to represent real life, or the figures as doing any real thing. It is true they are life-like and their actions are quite natural; but the positions in which they have been placed were chosen in order that the arrangement of their limbs and bodies might produce an effect of beautiful rhythmic balance. Perhaps this was Raphael's only thought, for he was above everything an artist, whose work in life it is to create forms of beauty. Yet he had a mind so ready to receive all kinds of impressions that, living as he did in a very lawless age, when men were guided more by self than justice, he may have realised how beautiful would be a reign of law and order.

Anyhow, this decoration in a wonderful way possesses just those characteristics that would belong to a state of society in which justice or justness were the natural habit and not merely a thing enforced by law. How simple life would be if every man did to others what he would have them do to him, and instead of rivalry and suspicion, what a harmony there would be! It is harmony and simplicity that are the chief characteristics of this decoration.

The simplicity is very marked. There are three principal figures. I believe, if there were nothing else but these, the balance of the composition would be complete, and certainly the allegory would be explained. But balance is not necessarily harmony. In a school debate, for instance, ten of you on the right of the room may say "aye," and ten on the left may say "no," to a subject which is being discussed between you. There is a balance — ten on one side, opposed to ten on the other.

But in this decoration there is harmony. You have only to look at the picture to be sure of it. You cannot detect any rivalry between the three figures, although one of them is so much more massive than either of the other two. All of them seem drawn together into one chord of feeling, the leading note of which is the head of *Prudence*,

lifted above the heads of her companions and seen alone against the open space of the sky and in the place of chief importance — the center of the arc of space. Please remind me presently to say a word about the placing of this head, for just now I do not wish to interrupt the subject that we are considering — the harmony of the composition.

This is brought about particularly by the *Amorini* that, as it were, bind the three figures into a garland of festoons. Note, first, the two which are on the extreme right and left. The wing and arm of the former and the inclination of the latter' s whole body suggest diagonal lines. These cut across the angles of the space, or as they say in geometry, subtend the angles; tying their two arms together and also offering a strong contrast to their direction. The baby figures also keep the composition from running away to nothing at the corners, for they serve the purpose of making the pattern curl up at each end. Or suppose we think of the pattern of the composition, as if it were partly made up of a wreath, such as we use at Christmas time to festoon our houses. Imagine a nail driven into the wall where the head of the baby on the left hand is. Attach the wreath to it. Now drive another nail into the puma's head and between this one and the first nail, let a loop of the wreath hang down so that it follows the direction of the baby's body and a bit of the oak stem. This direction, if you look at the picture, suggests a festoon. Now continue to make festoons — first along the arm of *Firmness* up to the hand of the Cupid; now another from that point along the line on the Cupid's wing and arm and up the arm of the next little figure; another from the top of the mirror, following the curve of the arm of *Prudence* up to her head. So far, on the left side of the painting we have four small festoons. But I wonder if you can make out another one a long one, the ends of which are fastened to the head of *Prudence* and that of the baby in the left corner. It follows the slope of the figure of *Prudence* until it reaches her foot, the direction of which starts it across the gap between her and *Firmness*, where the line reappears, following the folds of the latter's drapery, at first along the floor and then above her greave up to the baby's head.

And now for the right hand side of the painting. In the first place there is a repetition of the long festoon. This one is suspended from the head of *Prudence* to the top of the wing of the Cupid in the right

hand corner. It dips down along the curve of the torch, down through the folds of *Moderation's* drapery to her feet and then rises up and passes round the back of the child. But hanging above this main festoon are two rows of smaller ones. Firstly we find a very shallow festoon from the head of *Prudence* to the hand which holds the bit; another from this point to the top of the head of *Moderation*. Below this, however, is again a festoon from the bit, along the droop of the reins to the hand which holds them, from which point there is still another along the arm up to the head.

Now, I do not for a moment wish you to think that Raphael chose points in his composition and then arranged that the lines of the limbs and draperies should form festoons between them. In examining his work, I am trying not to tell you how he did it, but to explain what has been done. And here, clearly visible, are what I have called, festoons. We might describe them by some other name — as ripples of movement. For as the water in some shallow brook ripples over and between the stones dancing in the sunshine, so these curves of movement, now in light and now in shadow, flow between these figures and flow over them, until the whole composition is a woven mass of rhythmic undulations. Rhythmic? Yes, it is just because these ripples or festoons present such a beautiful example of rhythm, that I have dwelt upon them. In fact it is the rhythmic movement of the composition that gives to this painting its greatest charm.

In the following chapter I shall have more to say about the rhythmic movements of the figures. Let us conclude this one with a few words about the geometric plan on which the composition of the "*Jurisprudence*" is based. As I have said, it is not nearly so apparent as that of the *Disputá*. The latter's plan looks as if it might have been laid out with straight edge and compasses. It was, as I have told you, adapted from a composition by Raphael's master, Perugino, and he, very possibly, may have adapted it from some one else's plan; for in those days, artists did not see any harm in starting with another man's design, and altering it a little, or perhaps making it more elaborate to suit their own purpose for the moment. But in the short time that elapsed between the painting of the *Disputá* and the *Jurisprudence* the pupil had made great strides. He had found his own strength and was working in the glory of it. Therefore the *Jurisprudence* exhibits a

freedom of design, which so disguises the ground plan, that it is difficult to be sure of what it is, although one still feels that it is geometrical.

The first thing we note is that the artist has strengthened the bottom line of the lunette by repetition. He has carried a stone bench along the entire width, which also serves as a seat for the figures. Do you see the advantage of making the figures seated? If Raphael had represented them in a standing position, he would have had to make them smaller in order to get them entirely into the space; and this would have lessened the feeling of bigness in the composition. So he invented a device by which he could represent them seated. Further, he has raised the bench in the center by the addition of another step, so as to lift the composition naturally in the part where the space to be decorated is highest.

Thus from the corners, or angles of the lunette there is on each side a gradual rise up to the head of *Prudence*, that suggests a pyramid or a triangle within the curved space. The same triangular effect is repeated in the pattern, made by the figures of *Prudence* and the Cupid who holds the torch. The curve of the torch is so arranged as to balance the slope of the woman's legs. So the geometric plan may be the repetition of a smaller, inside a larger triangle, contrasted with the curve of the lunette. On the other hand, if you look at the painting again, you notice that the Cupid with the torch is balanced by the one who holds the mirror. Their bodies have a vertical or upright direction, and then the tops of the torch and the mirror supply points which the eye seems to join by a horizontal line, so that a rectangle occupies the center of the composition as it does in the *Disputá*. This strong contrast of a rectangular form to the curve of the lunette, and then again the contrast of the diagonal lines, formed by the Cupids' figures across the angles of the space, may be the simple geometric elements out of which this composition grew.

CHAPTER 7
The Action, Movement and Composition of the Figure

When a few pages back I spoke of the *movement* of the figures I was using the word as artists understand it. They do not mean by it that the figure is represented as moving its limbs or body. For this they use the word "action." They speak of the action of the figure. But when they talk of "movement" they refer to the *way* in which the action is expressed. They mean that one, continuous stream of energy winds in and out through all the undulations of the action. Thus, in the figure of *Moderation*: the action consists in the fact that she is seated, with her legs extended to one side, while her body turns in the opposite direction, and while the hands are stretched out in the direction that the body faces, the head is turned away. If you compare the action of this figure with that of either of the others, you will see how much more complicated it is; how many more windings it makes. And an artist would say that this figure has a fine *movement*, because through all the windings or undulations of action one can feel a continuous stream of energy; so that every part of the figure contributes exactly its natural share to the action, and the lines of the figure, from the toe to the hand that holds the bit, flow continuously and harmoniously. The only way in which you can see for yourself how fine the movement is, is to study it very carefully, and by degrees you will begin to discover how wonderfully the flow of movement is expressed. It may help you, if you put yourself into the same position, that is to say, make your own body represent this action. At first it may seem a little awkward, but presently, as you adjust your body to the actions, you will find that it seems easy and natural, for you will have secured a perfect poise. And, after all, it is the perfect poise in the action of this figure of *Moderation* that helps to make the movements so fine.

Now turn to the figure of *Prudence*, Here the action is much

simpler. The body faces in the same direction that the legs extend. But it leans back a little. If you try the action yourself, you will find it difficult, for the stretching out of the legs makes you wish to bring your body forward, so as to make the balance easy. But Raphael, knowing this, has made *Prudence* prop up her body, as it were, by leaning its weight on her left arm. Do you see how this forces up her left shoulder? The representation of this and the drawing of the arm make us feel what a pressure of weight downwards the hand has to support. Artists, you will find, usually make some one part of the figure carry the chief weight. Sometimes they may paint a standing figure in which the weight passes straight down through the figure and is supported evenly by the two feet, like a column bearing down on to its base. But, more often, they make one leg carry the chief weight, or, as in this figure, one arm. Then it becomes very interesting; first, to study the part of chief *muscular strain*, and secondly, to note how all the other parts of the action harmonise with it. For example, in this figure of *Prudence*, although the arm sustains the chief pressure, a considerable amount must bear down through her trunk[2] on to the seat. But, if we compare her trunk with that of *Moderation*, I think we shall feel at once that the latter is supporting the greater weight. In fact, the point of greatest muscular action in the figure of *Moderation* is at the base of the trunk.

But to return to *Prudence*. We have noted that the left shoulder is raised higher than the right. Now observe the inclination of the head as it leans gently forward on the neck to gaze into the mirror and the easy action of the arm that holds the light mirror. Equally easy and without effort is the action of the legs. In fact, except for the firm quiet pressure on the arm, the whole figure suggests a gracious repose, not only is the expression of the face sweetly meditative, but the same *feeling*, as the artists would say, of exquisite repose pervades the entire figure. You should learn to look for this in pictures. Do not be satisfied only with a beautiful face; but expect to find the beauty and the same kind of beauty expressed in the action and movement of the figure. For it is in this expression of feeling that an artist shows

[2] The body between the neck and the commencement of the legs.

his skill.

Compare the feeling in the figure of *Moderation*. It is no less marked, though the feeling expressed is a different one. It is also quiet and gracious, but it does not suggest repose. Corresponding with the flexible, winding movement, the feeling is rather one of reaching out, as if in pleading or tender invitation. However, it is often very difficult to explain in words just what the feeling of a figure expresses; and perhaps it is better not to try to do so. The main thing for you is to get the habit of feeling the feeling.

Now let us study the feeling of *Firmness*. Like that of the central figure, it suggests repose; but a repose not so much of gracious meditation, as of strength and force. In a moment, if need be, this figure would rise to its feet, thrill with alertness and put forth its strength. Meanwhile, as it sits, the line of pressure is straight down through the center of the trunk, and it is the lower muscles of the back that are supporting the chief weight. One shoulder is raised, not however, because it has to bear any pressure as in the case of the central figure, but simply because the trunk inclines a little toward the puma. Observe, though, that the head is held erect over the central line of the figure. If it were not, the feeling of firm strength in the figure would be lessened. On the other hand the face is turned to one side, in order that by its contrast of direction the movement of the whole figure may be more effective.

For, I wonder if you have noticed that the movement in every case presents a chain of contrasts and repetitions. Start, for example, with the left foot of *Firmness*, and move your finger over the direction of the figure; first up the calf of the leg to the knee; then off toward the right to the hip; then leftward up the body, then again to the right at the slope of the shoulders; then slightly to the left up the neck, and lastly note the face turned to the right. You will have found that your finger has described a series of zig-zags. If you start with the other foot, the figure will equally present a series of zig-zags, though some differ from the former ones.

Similarly, if you begin with the foot of *Prudence*, your eye travels up to the knee; then horizontally toward the lap; next up the slight backward slope of the body; then in the opposite direction, when you reach the neck and head. The contrasts in the figure of *Moderation*

are so marked, that I am sure you can make the zig-zag for yourself.

I have used the word zig-zag because I want you to feel how marked the contrasts are, and to realise that it is by means of these contrasts that an artist composes his figures. The zig-zag, however, in the actual figure has rounded angles; it is indeed rather a series of alternate curves to right and left, somewhat like the curves described by a skilful and graceful skater, cutting figures on the ice. And it is this series of curves that give the effect of rhythm as well as harmony to the figures in this picture. For, as you may have seen for yourself, the principles on which an artist composes a single figure are the same as those he uses in the composition of several figures into one picture. He relies upon repetitions and contrasts to produce a balance, which because of its rhythm of parts shall ensure a harmonious whole.

The only difference in the case of the picture is that the composition is made up, not only of figures, but of the empty spaces of the background also. As artists would say, the composition is an arrangement of full and empty spaces; and its beauty depends upon the harmony and balance between them. In the *Jurisprudence*, for example, it is remarkable how the space filled by the figure of *Prudence*, corresponds in size and even in its wedge shape to the empty space formed by the upper and lower step of stonework. For the rest, the quantity of space occupied by the other two figures seems to be about equal to the empty spaces around them, though the latter, instead of being solid masses are broken up and distributed. But you will notice, how large a stretch of empty space is left at the top of the lunette, so that the eye is drawn upward and the dignity of the whole decoration thereby elevated. Note also, what a quiet impressive spot the head of *Prudence* makes against the background of the sky. There is, as it were, nothing to disturb its gracious repose. This device of setting a figure against the background of the sky, Raphael may have learned from one of his masters, Perugino. At any rate, both employed it, with beautiful effect.

You may often see in nature the beauty of this effect; when, for example, on the top of some rising ground a tree, or a figure, or a church spire, stands against the sky. If the object is motionless, it seems to become more impressive because of the vastness of the sky. Or, should the objects be children at play (I can remember a picture

of this), then their sport seems to take on more joyousness, freedom, and buoyancy, from the vastness of the sky.

And now, a short description of the way in which this decoration was painted. It is what is called "fresco," an Italian word that means "fresh." The name is used because the painting is done while the plaster of the wall is still fresh, that is to say, not "set" or dry. The following is the process. The wall was first covered, as in our houses to-day, with a coat of rough-cast plaster, which was allowed to dry thoroughly. In the meanwhile the artist had prepared full-sized drawings of his figures. As soon as he was ready, a thin coating of smooth-finish plaster was spread over such portion of the lunette as he could paint in a day. Upon this the drawing was placed and an assistant would go over all the lines with a blunt-pointed tool, pressing hard enough on the paper to leave a mark in the plaster underneath. There, when the paper was removed, appeared the figure, enclosed in grooved lines. Then the artist set to work and laid in the color, using paint that was mixed, not with oil, but with water to which some gluey substance was added. The plaster, you remember, was still damp, but since it contained plenty of cement, dried or "set" quickly, and as it dried, the paint dried with it, and became a part of the plaster. When it was done, the artist, if he wished, could add a few decisive strokes. The following day another portion of the lunette would be treated in the same manner and so on until the whole was painted. It is a method, you see, that left the artist no chance of fumbling over his work. He had to make up his mind beforehand exactly what he meant to do, and to do it quickly. Hence, with an artist so skilled as Raphael, the work has the extra charm that belongs to what has been done easily and fluently. You know how much pleasanter it is to listen to an easy, fluent speaker than to one who hesitates and corrects himself continually. So, too, in a work of art, the feeling that it has grown easily under the artist's hand adds to our enjoyment of it. It seems to be a spontaneous expression of himself.

CHAPTER 8
The Classic Landscape

We have seen in the previous chapters how Raphael built up composition from a simple geometric plan, on the principles of repetition and contrast, rhythmically balanced. Other Italian artists worked upon the same lines, and with such skill and grandeur of invention that the Italian pictures, especially of the Sixteenth Century, are still considered the finest examples of this sort of composition. It is distinguished by being what we may call "formal," or "conventional."

The figures are arranged, that is to say, not as you would be likely to see them in actual life, but according to a rule or formula or convention. The idea has been not to represent a real scene, but to display the figures and their surroundings in such a way as to produce an effect of beauty; sometimes a simple one, more often one of great impressiveness or magnificent splendor. The figures and other objects have been so arranged and so drawn as to furnish an orderly pattern of beauty and dignity. The subjects of the pictures might be taken from the Bible story or from the legends of ancient Greece, or be simply invented to set forth the pride that the people took in their cities — the pomp and glory of Venice, for example. But, no matter what the subject might be, the aim of the artist was first and foremost to paint a thing of beauty. And in this search for beauty he soon discovered how much depended upon the surroundings of his figures and the objects that he introduced.

When he desired the simpler kind of beauty he set his figures in lovely landscape scenery with hills and trees and winding streams; when he was bent on grander effects, he added architectural settings. For the architects of that day were erecting noble buildings with columns and arches, vaulted roofs and domes; partly in imitation of the remains of Roman architecture, but also designed in a fresh spirit of invention to fit the new purposes for which the buildings were

required. Thus arose that vast temple of the Roman Church, St. Peter's. It is what is called a classic building; because its style is in many respects like that of the old classic Roman temples, which in their turn had represented a new use of the still older classic style of Greek architecture.

The painters, then, inspired by the work of the architects, discovered how much dignity they could give to their own compositions by introducing architectural features. Sometimes they would introduce columns, or a flight of steps or a balustrade, sometimes a whole building; or represent the figures grouped in a street or square, surrounded by buildings, or often inside a building, standing under a vaulted ceiling. These are only a few of the architectural features, so freely used by the Italian painters. Let us study their value to the composition.

Some people who live in country homes are fond of flowers. They grow cluster-roses, honeysuckle, wistaria and other long-armed climbing plants over their verandahs. If they are fond of gardening and not satisfied merely with a lawn and a few shrubs, they will erect arches and trellis-work on which vines may cling and cluster. In the first place, they know that these slender, straggling plants will thrive better, if they have some support; they will not be so torn by the buffets of the wind, and their limbs and leaves and flowers will get more sunshine. Secondly, they will show to better advantage, because of the contrast of their winding, wreathing forms and irregular masses with the firm, strong, simple lines of the verandah or trellis-work. United they form a prettier composition, than would the vines and cluster-roses, if huddling in an unsupported tangle.

The principle is the same in the composition of a picture, where the vines are represented by the action of the figures. To their irregular masses of drapery and undulating lines of limbs the architecture presents at once the contrast and support of decided lines and clearly defined masses. And since the classic style of architecture, which was used, is so noble, it added nobility to the composition. Even the penny photographs of the Italian pictures will prove to you that this is so. Study them and find this out for yourselves.

Now, the example of the Italians, in this respect, was followed by other nations, especially the French. The latter continue to this day

the painting of beautiful pictures in which the figures are combined with landscape and architecture. And our own American artists are doing the same thing, as you can see if you have a chance of visiting the Library of Congress, at Washington, or any other of the public buildings throughout this country, in which the walls have been décorated with mural paintings.[3]

So far we have been speaking of the use of architecture to support the figures. In time, however, artists found a new use for it. They employed it to support the landscape; which brings us to a talk about what is called the "Classic Landscape."

Nowadays, when so many artists paint nothing else but landscape pictures, it may seem strange that the Italians of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries used landscape only as a support for the figures. It was not because they were blind to the beautiful scenery of their own country, for, when they did introduce it into their pictures, they represented it in a very lovely way. But always as a background to the figures, which you are made to feel are the principal features of the picture. The reason is that the public for whom they painted demanded figure subjects. The Church required pictures that would bring home to the hearts of the people who could not read the beauty of the Bible Story; rich men and women wished to decorate their palaces with scenes from the old Greek legends; while cities adorned their public buildings with allegorical subjects in which the pride they took in their own municipal life was set forth in figures, personifying the character of its greatness. Moreover, those were stirring times in which the rivalry between the cities and between the noble families led to constant wars and plottings. Men, beginning as nobodies, rose rapidly to power. Not, as they do to-day in our country, by using their brains and energy in the peaceful pursuits of industry and trade and learning; but through brute force, guided by brains that schemed to win by fraud and violence. So it was man that, as we say, cut the chief figure in these times; man's power and woman's beauty. Mankind was so interested in itself that it spared little thought for the beauty of

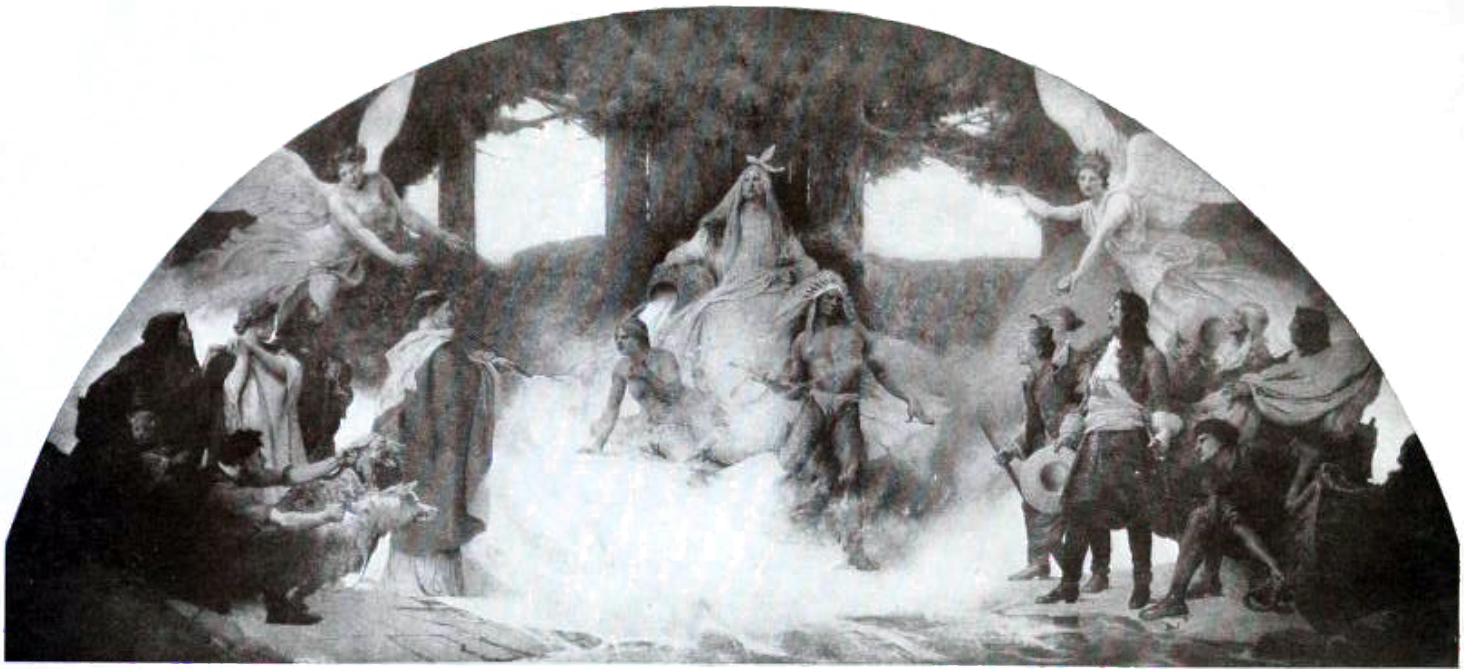
[3] Mural — (Latin *murus*, a wall), having to do with a wall; in this case a decoration on a wall.

nature. It is true that architects built noble houses on sites commanding beautiful views and laid out the gardens with fountains, trees and flowers. Even this however, was for the glorification of some man or woman. But the love of nature which leads artists to paint landscapes and the public to value such pictures is a different thing. In the love of nature man forgets himself; he is absorbed in the beauty of the natural world outside himself; he is fond of nature for its own sake.

It was not until the Seventeenth Century that artists began to study and paint the landscape in this spirit. When they did so, the landscape took the first place in their pictures, and the figures, if any were introduced, became the unimportant features, kept small and put in merely to enliven the scene. By this time landscape painting, as a subject distinct in itself, branched out into two directions — the *naturalistic* and the *formal*. The *naturalistic* was practised by the Dutch artists, who painted the out of door life and appearance of Holland so truthfully, that to-day when we look at their pictures we can see the meadows and streams, the mills and the farms, exactly as they were three hundred years ago. But the subject of natural landscape we will study later on.

The other kind of landscape I have called *formal* because, instead of being drawn directly from nature, it was made up, like the Italian figure pictures, according to a rule or formula or convention. Just as in those pictures the figures were represented as grander and more beautiful than people usually are in real life, and were arranged for the purpose of a handsome composition in attitudes that people do not usually assume, so with the formal landscapes. The artists tried to make them more grand and imposing than ordinary nature, and composed them according to an artificial plan. They did not in their picture represent any real scene in nature, but built up a number of natural details into a composition, constructed on a geometric plan. And especially they introduced details of classic architecture; so that these formal designs are often called *classic* landscapes.

If you turn to the illustration you will see at once that the artist has not represented the natural landscape. The very title, *Dido Building Carthage,* shows the classic influence. The subject is taken from Virgil's Æneid, Book I, line 420. Turner, the great English artist,



The Manitou Lunette, E. H. Blashfield

who in 1815 painted this picture, had never seen Carthage; nor had he ever seen any spot on earth like the one represented here. What he had seen was the work of Claude Terrain, a French artist of the Seventeenth Century, who lived in Italy and invented this kind of landscape. Turner himself preferred to paint the natural landscape; but, since the people of his own day admired the classic landscape of Claude and his followers, he wished to prove that he also could paint like Claude, if he chose; and as well as the French artist. Therefore, when he died, he left this picture and another classic landscape, *The Sun rising in a Mist,* to the National Gallery, on condition that they should be hung alongside of two by Claude Lorrain. So, while studying this picture we are really studying the principles on which Claude built up the *classic* landscape, and on which his followers worked for nearly two hundred years, until the love of nature won out and the *naturalistic* landscape took its place.

The geometric plan of this picture is very simple. You can discover it by joining the upper and lower opposite corners by two diagonal lines that cut each other in the center. This produces four triangles; of which the top is given to the sky, the bottom to the water, and the two sides to the land and buildings and trees. Sky and water occupy more space than the other two parts; but since the latter are filled with details of bold design, they attract extra attention, so that the balance between the full and empty spaces is kept true.

The balance is a harmonious one. You will perhaps realise better what this means if you think for a moment of a balance that is not harmonious; for instance of a pair of hanging scales, in one pan of which there is a flat round one pound weight, exactly balancing a pound of candy in the other pan. We should not call this a harmonious balance. If we examine why it is not, it will help us to understand the meaning of harmony in composition. The reason is that there is no relation between the box of candy and the one pound weight, except that each weighs the same. On the other hand, in the picture every detail has some relation to the other details, and all are related to the whole. The whole, in fact, is a woven mass of contrasts and repetitions, in exact relation; very much as a composition of music is made up of exactly related contrasts and repetitions of sound notes.

Alter one of these and there will be a discord, unless some other notes are altered to restore the harmony. Similarly if the artist had altered the shape of one of the details in his picture, or its color, or its lightness or darkness, there would have been a discord in the effect of his picture; it would no longer present the appearance of perfect oneness. He would have to alter some other parts to restore the harmony.

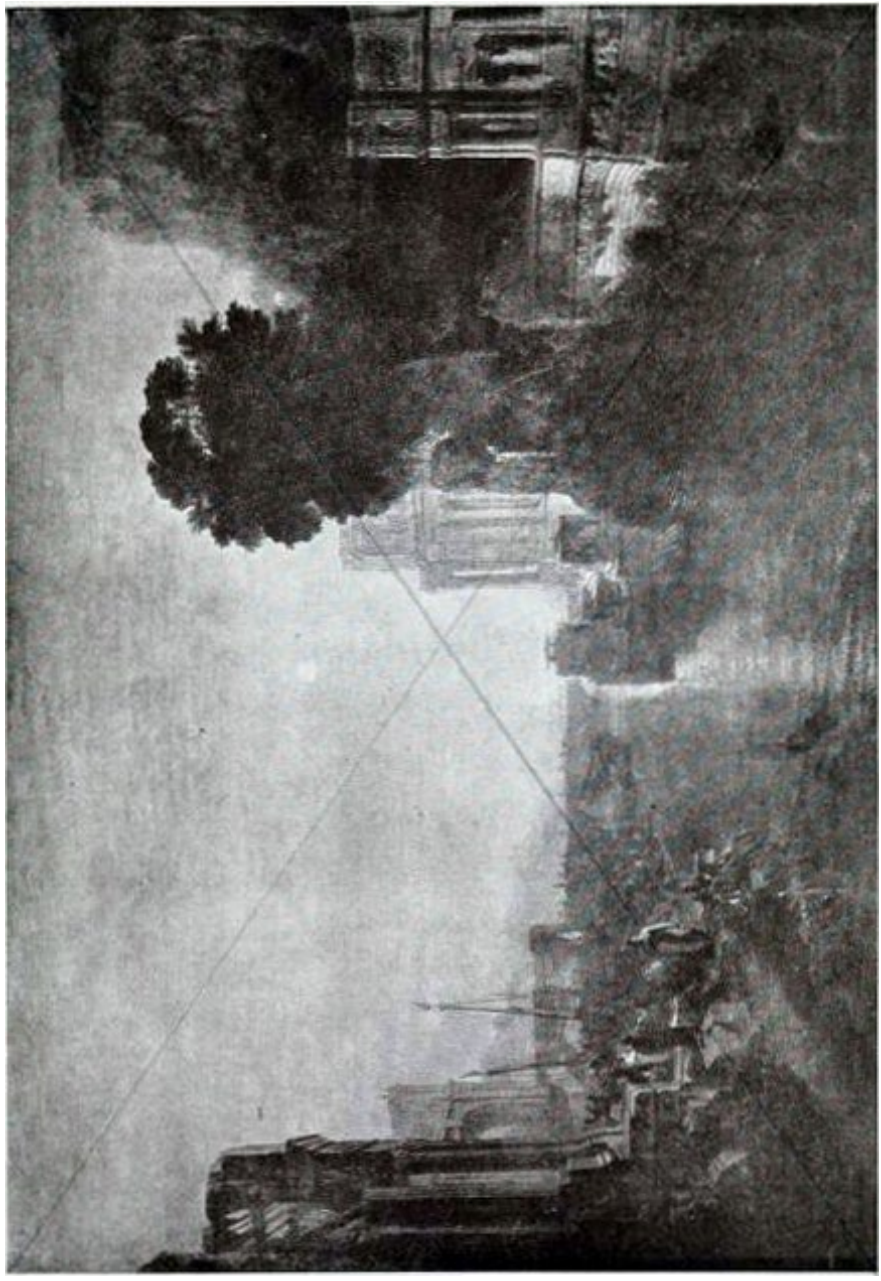
In studying the picture to try and discover how the effect of harmony is produced we find ourselves studying the contrasts and repetitions of which it is composed. And, first the contrasts. One big one is the contrast of the architecture with everything else in the picture — the contrast of these quiet stately masses, which seem so firm and strong, compared with the shimmering surface of the water and the tremulous mistiness of the sky; the contrast also of their decided lines with the irregular spotting of the figures, and with the irregular masses of the trees and foliage. The big tree, although it is motionless in the quiet air, seems as if a breeze would stir it; the water has ripples of motion; some of the figures appear to be moving, while others are only still for the moment, and the sky — it is palpitating with the actual stir of the atmosphere, as the upper air gradually cools and draws up the warmer air from below, and this warmer air cools into mistiness. But the buildings stand immovable and solid. While all around them either moves or could move, they seem to suggest the force and permanence of what does not change. Or perhaps we may feel that grand as the buildings are, stately and magnificent, yet the sky is lovelier, for the buildings are limited to their one size and shape, while the sky seems a part of that which has no limits or boundaries. It draws off our imagination into the mystery of distance and of the unknown. So the impressions which the contrast of the architecture arouses are not only such as the eye can see, but such also as the imagination can feel. This, no doubt, is one of the secrets of the pleasure which so many people have found and still find in *classic* landscapes.

And now for another series of contrasts: those supplied by the lights and darks. In the original picture these contrasts would depend partly on the color of the various objects; but here, in the black and white reproduction, we may think of the pattern simply as one of very dark spots and very light ones, threaded together by others of varying

depths of greyness. Again, what an important part the sky plays! It is a flood of light, against which everything forms a silhouette,[4] more or less dark, relieved by spots and streaks of light. The water, but for the pathway of reflection, is shrouded in shadow. Shadow, too, is wrapping itself round the tall building on the left, and slumbers drowsily among the trees on the opposite hill slopes. The artist, you will notice, has varied the distribution of shadows. On the left the gradation from very dark to very light is continuous. It is as if the first building struck a loud strong note, and the sound gradually diminished toward the distance. On the right, however, the foreground is lighter, and the dark gradually increases, swelling up, as they say in music, in a *crescendo* effect and then passing in a *diminuendo* far off into the distance. In fact, on both sides of the picture the arrangement of dark and light is rhythmical. I have only touched upon the broad general plan of contrasted darks and lights, and must leave you to study for yourselves the intricate and subtle effects with which the picture abounds; for example, the fine threads and little dots of light and dark that form a tangle on the left bank; or, on the right, the mass of leafage in half shadow against which the trunk of the tree shows very dark. You know the old proverb about leading a horse to the water. I can draw your attention to these things, but I can not make you feel their beauty. I think, however, I can promise you, that, if you are sufficiently interested in what we are talking about to really study this picture, to explore carefully the lighter parts and peer into the shadows to see what lurks within them, its beauty will make itself known to you.

As I myself am examining a black and white reproduction of this picture, that lies before me while I write these lines, there is music coming from the next room. It has stopped, and I wish it would begin again; for music seems to fit in with the impressions that this picture stirs in my imagination. Nor is this merely a fanciful idea. Music is one art and painting is another. They are different, it is true, but yet

[4] In 1759 a M. de Silhouette was minister of finance, and he was so economical that the French used his name as a nickname for cheap things, among others for the profile portraits cut out of black paper, which were then popular. In time, the word came to be used for any dark mass seen against a light one.



Dido Building Carthage, J. M. W. Turner

are sisters with much in common. And why not? For they come from the same parents — the hand and the mind of man. And through the harmony of the light and dark of which this picture is composed there floats, it seems to me, the fancy of a melody. I think it comes from out the endless distance of that sky; gently floating toward us, and crooning over the objects in the foreground, as a mother murmurs a lullaby over her baby while it falls asleep. But it is not altogether crooning, for see that tree's dark, round mass of tone! How it thumps itself into our notice, while its force spreads up the hill, and then leaps across the water, and stirs with a different kind of energy in the dark building on the left. There is nothing of the feebleness and the helplessness of a baby in this picture. It suggests rather, big and mighty effort, growing toward the time of rest. It is not the music of a lullaby I seem to hear, but the evening hymn of sturdy workers as they cease for a little from their toil.

CHAPTER 9
Naturalistic Composition

In the preceding chapters we have been studying *formal*, or *conventional*, composition. We have seen how the artists arrange their groups of figures and the position and gestures of each figure according to a rule or formula or convention, the basis of which is a geometric plan, on which they build up a balance of repetitions and contrasts. And we have noted that these formal compositions are artificial arrangements; that the figures are not grouped as you might expect them to be in real life, nor in positions that men and women usually assume. And these formal compositions we have seen were also called, *classic*; the last example being the *classic landscape* in which nature has been made to look more grand by the addition of features of classic architecture.

We reach now another principle of composition. It is the arrangement adopted by the artist, whose motive is to make his picture represent nature naturally; so I call it *naturalistic composition.* But, as we have noted before, the artist is not satisfied merely to represent nature; he wishes in the first place to make his picture a thing of beauty. Nature is not always beautiful; so he selects from nature and arranges his subject in such a way, that we shall not only recognise how true the picture is to nature, but feel also how beautiful it is as a work of art. Its beauty, you see, is founded, not upon a formal plan, but on its truth to nature.

Here for example, is *The Sower* by the French artist, Jean Francois Millet. If we have ever seen a man scattering grain, we recognise at once the picture's truth to life. But Millet's intention was not only to make us know what the man is doing, but to create an impression on our minds that shall make us feel a sense of beauty, through the way in which the picture represents the incident. As a young man. Millet had studied the examples of Greek and Roman sculpture in the Museum of the Louvre in Paris, and learnt through them the classic

principles of composition — the balance obtained by rhythmical repetition and contrast. And these principles, as we shall see presently, are applied to this figure of *The Sower*, I hope to show you that this is the secret of the picture's beauty. Although the *action* of the figure inside the shabby clothes is quite natural, the *movement* is rhythmical. In fact it represents a mixture of the *classical* and the *naturalistic* motive.

Firstly, the naturalistic. We know at a glance what the man is doing. The forms in the picture, the colors, the light and shade, make an impression on the eye which is immediately telegraphed to one of the centers of the brain. The result is that we know the picture represents a man in a field sowing grain, while from the color and light in the sky, and the shadows creeping over the field, we know that it is twilight.

This direct thought stirs ns to further thinking; for we recall that laborers start for their work in early morning, so this one has probably been toiling all through the day. But we notice that his actions are still vigorous, he should be tired, yet he is working as sturdily as at any time during the day; perhaps with even more energy, in order that he may finish sowing the field before the darkness comes. In fact, the arrangement of forms, colors, and light and shade has made a strong impression on the thinking part of the brain, stirring us not only to observe, but to draw conclusions. And this, of course, is what Millet meant that it should do.

But this was not all that he intended. Most people of his day must have thought it was; for nearly all the critics, or persons who are supposed to be able to judge of the value of a picture, and nearly all the connoisseurs, who are supposed to be able to appreciate its beauty, turned up their noses and shrugged their shoulders. "This is horrible!" they exclaimed. "A common laborer in his dirty clothes, doing his miserable work. Ugh! how vulgar! This is not art; for art should be concerned with beauty. Why does not the fellow paint some beautiful girl in beautiful draperies? Phew! Take the picture away, it smells of the farm."

You see they confined their criticisms and appreciation to what the picture was about — its subject; and "because they did not like the subject, they condemned the picture. They got no further than

knowing and *thinking*, they did not permit themselves to *feel*. But it was on their feelings also that Millet wished to make an impression. Through the arrangement of line, form, color, and light and shade he sought to stir that other part of the brain to which messages are telegraphed by the senses, with a result that we are made to feel. Let us analyse the composition; and see how it illustrates the principle that we have been discussing of balance, and rhythmic repetition, and contrast.

We will begin with the latter. Note, then, how the sloping line of the field cuts across the picture. This diagonal line is contrasted with the perpendicular sides of the picture, and with the upright direction of the figure of the man. It forms, however, another contrast; it divides the light from the dark. The sun has gone down behind the slope; so that, while the sky is still luminous with a lovely glow, the ground is in shadow, dreary and heavy looking. So, too, the figure of the man. The light is at his back, so that what we see of him is shrouded in gloom. Against the gloom of the ground his figure shows comparatively indistinctly, but the upper part stands very sharp against the light. There is a strong contrast between its heaviness and gloom and the lovely radiance of the waning light; while down below the figure looms out of the gloom and heaviness, as if it were a part of them that had gathered into definite shape. Yes, though his head may stand against the sky, the man is part of the earth.

Eight away, is there nothing in this to make us feel? Millet, at any rate, had often felt the poignancy of contrast, in his own life and in the lives of others. He had known what it was to see his wife and children short of food, to have his own stomach empty, while his mind was full of beautiful ideas, and his cottage full of pictures, that some day men would buy, but not yet. He had seen little bright faced children standing at the open grave of the father or the mother; the happy young bride at the altar, and among the congregation the young widow; and evening after evening, as the darkness fell, the lonely figures in the field, toiling out their short lives, whilst behind them spread the everlasting beauty of the sunset, and a few miles off in Paris, where he came from, the lights were gleaming and people were making ready for pleasure, though there too, as he knew from his own experience, people starved. Yes, it is through experience that

we learn to feel deeply, and it is to experience that the contrast of this picture appeals.

When we recognise that by this contrast of light and darkness. Millet sought to express the dreary routine, day in day out, early and late, of the peasant's lot in a world where nature is so beautiful, and there can be so much beauty in life, we may imagine to ourselves what would be the effect of raising or lowering the diagonal line. To have given more lighted space, would have made the figure stand out too prominently so that it would have dominated the scene, and the scene itself would have seemed too spacious. Velasquez, in his equestrian portraits, kept the horizon line low, so that *Philip IV,* for example, or his minister, *Olivarez,* is made to appear a very important person in a very large world. But Millet wished us to feel the lowliness of the peasant, bound close to the earth in very narrow surroundings. Again, to have raised the horizon line, would have destroyed the balance between light and darkness, which now is absolutely true. This balance suggests a feeling of repose; shall I say of acquiescence in the necessity of the contrast? For Millet did not consider himself a reformer whose work is to set things right and to do away with contrasts; but an artist, whose aim was to harmonise the contrasts and to find some balance between the lights and darks of life; just as Stevenson out of his weakness and strength made his life a beautiful one.

And now let us study the lines of the figure. In the first place you will agree that they enclose a form which is unmistakably that of a man sowing grain. It was necessary for Millet to arrange the lines, in some way that should convey this impression. But there are many other ways in which they might have been arranged, so as to obtain this result. For in the act of sowing a man takes many positions and any one of these would have done, if all the artist had desired was to make us *know* that the man was sowing. But Millet wished to do more.

As a boy he toiled in his father's fields, so he had a fellow-feeling for the peasants; and as he watched them, day after day laboring so faithfully, he found a big idea in their work. It was something like this — work is necessary, and to do our own share of it as well as we can is the big thing for each of us. And the oldest work of all and the most

necessary is the growing of the wheat. To-day the seed is laid in rows by machine-drills; but in Millet's time it was scattered by hand, just as it had been since man began to sow. This sower, then, that he watched was a descendant of a long line of sowers, stretching back to the beginning of civilisation; and still in the fields of Barbizon he was doing his humble share of the world's necessary work. Millet felt the bigness of this idea; and in his imagination the man was no longer



The Sower, J. F. Millet

Jacques or Jean — a sower; he became "The Sower," a type — a big heroic type. Then, as Millet felt him to be, so he set to work to paint him, choosing such lines as would convey this big feeling to us. Observe, first, the balance of the figure: how the weight of the body is planted almost equally on both feet. If you try to put yourself in the position, you will find that you can raise neither foot without moving the body. If you wish to raise the back foot, you must move the body forward till the weight is on the right foot; or, if you would raise this latter, you must move the body back till the weight is over the left foot. The center of gravity or of mass runs down through the body and between the legs. Now sway your body backward and forward a few times, and then bring forward the left leg in front of the right, so that the position of the feet is reversed. Now sway again forward and backward. I ask you to do this that you may feel how freely the body moves in this position. And I ask you to stride, that you may feel that the position in the picture is only a momentary one, leading on to a natural advance. For this perfect poise of the body on the feet is not a stationary one, that in time will seem stiff, but part of a moving one, that has the freedom and the naturalness of life. And the movement is a swift one. We can feel it is so from the length of the stride; for it is only when you are moving quickly, that you can take long strides, and still preserve the balanced, rhythmic swing of the body.

We have spoken of the poise of the body on the legs; now let us note the action of the right arm. The action, I need hardly say, begins with taking a handful of grain from the bag; then the arm is swung back to the right to its full extent, and then again brought back to the bag. Between these two points — that of the bag and that of the full extent — the arm is poised in motion, just as the action of the body was poised between the backward and forward motion of the legs. We can feel that the arm is moving, and, at this instant it is moving backward, for our own experience when we walk and swing our arms naturally is that each arm goes back as the leg on that side goes forward. The man's arm will reach its furthest point backward when he brings his full weight on the right foot. In a word, the poise of the arm and the poise of the leg correspond. They present an example of repetition of balance. It is enforced, you will observe, in the composition by the arm being made parallel to the direction of

the backward leg. This is another instance of repetition; and there are still others: the repetitions of the waist line, the shoulders, and the hat brim; of the bandage on the left leg, the line from the shoulder through the thigh, the apron, hanging over the arm, and of the echo, as it were, of these, in the tail of the distant ox and the arm of the driver. These repetitions, and others that you may discover for yourself, help to bind the composition together and also to make it rhythmic.

And now for contrast, we have noted the big one made by the diagonal line, dividing the composition into light and dark. Let us note those appearing in the figure. First there is the big contrast of the figure's own diagonal line from the shoulders down through the right leg. It is contrasted most forcibly with the sides of the picture, the horizon line, and the direction of the right arm and the left leg. The latter are practically at right angles to the figure — strongest of all contrasts of line. It is to all these vigorous contrasts that the energy and assertion of the figure are mainly due. But there are other contrasts in the figure. Do you notice that the swing of the arm brings the trunk of the body, or the torso, as it is called, along with it? Swing your own arm and you will find your torso following its direction. If the man's arm were to reach its full extension, his left shoulder would appear and his torso would front us nearly full. If his hand should reach the bag, the right shoulder would come forward until the torso would be seen almost in profile. However, neither of these extremes is presented. The swing of the torso is poised between the two. But do you observe that the swing of the torso and arms is across the path of direction of the swing of the legs? While they swing forward and backward, the arms and torso swing alternately from right to left and left to right.

Imitate this action with your own body, step forward briskly with a swinging stride and at the same time swing your arms and torso. If you feel the exhilaration of the action as I think you will, you will realise that it is the wonderful way in which Millet has suggested this contrast of the swing, that makes the action of the figure so stirring. By the contrast of its lines, it expresses energy; by the contrast of swing, so free, so rhythmic, so vigorous, it lifts us to enthusiasm.

But finally observe the position of the head and the direction of

its gaze. While below it the torso and arms swing from side to side, the head is fixed, leaning a little forward in the direction of the onward movement, its eyes firmly set on what is ahead. Within the head is the brain which directs all the action of the figure. But the face is shadowed over, and through the shadow the features appear coarse and heavy. We feel that the brain, though prompting the man to do his work to the utmost, is after all a dull brain, in pitiful contrast to the vigor of the body. Heroic though the figure is in the grandeur of its free, swift movement, as grand, if you will take my word for it, as a Greek statue, yet it is but that of a humble peasant, unconscious that he is doing aught but that which he has to do.

There you have the idea as it presented itself to the imagination of Millet!

"The Sower" is a striking illustration of the point with which I started this book; that the beauty of a picture does not depend upon the subject, but upon the way it is represented.

CHAPTER 10
Naturalistic Composition (Continued)

In *The Sower,* by Millet, we found that, though the composition was naturalistic, it was based upon the classic principle of rhythm of line. We shall not discover this principle in the present picture of a *Young Woman Opening a Window.* The arrangement of the figure and its surroundings is simply natural.

The picture is by Johannes Vermeer[5] of Delft, so called because this town in Holland was his birthplace and the scene of his life's work. Bom in 1632, he is one of those famous Dutch artists of the Seventeenth Century, of whom I have already spoken. We were talking of landscape painting and mentioned that in this century the art branched out in two directions. Landscape up to that time having been used as a background for figures, became then an independent art, cultivated for its own sake; and the artists treated it in two ways. On the one hand, some applied the principles of geometric composition to an artificial building up of bits of nature into what is called the formal, or classic landscape; while other painters represented the natural landscape naturally. These latter were the Dutchmen, who treated figures also in the same realistic spirit. That is to say, whether they painted portraits or figure pictures or landscapes, their aim was to represent the actual subject as they really saw it. They did not substitute an artificial arrangement for the natural appearance of people and things; nor did they try to obtain beauty by altering and improving upon nature. Their motive or purpose was to render the beauty that is actually in nature. So, for the most part, they chose subjects of familiar every day life.

This picture, for example, represents simply a glimpse of home life, of a Dutch girl in well-to-do circumstances. Perhaps the artist intended to make a portrait of her; probably his intention was only to

[5] Pronounced Yo-hann-es Fair-mair.

paint a genre picture, that is to say, an incident of every day life. Not so much, however, for the sake of representing the incident, as of making it contribute to a subject of abstract beauty. How he has done this I hope we shall see presently. Meanwhile, I want you to grasp the distinction between simply representing an incident, as you or I might have seen it, if we had been present, and Vermeer's motive of using the incident as a peg on which to hang some beauty of light and color and texture. I mean, it was the beauty of light and color and texture that made him pleased to paint this picture; and probably he would have been just as pleased if some other girl had been standing there, or some other objects had been spread upon the table.

Perhaps a familiar example will illustrate this distinction. Two people start off for an afternoon's walk. One sets out because he wishes to call upon a friend who lives on the other side of the wood. To pay this call is the object of his walk; for the friend is building a new house. As he walks along he is busy wondering how far it is advanced, whether the plasterers have finished their work; and as he returns home he is thinking about the house he has seen and how he himself, when he builds a house of his own, will plan it differently. In fact, the incident of his friend's being engaged in building is what interests him, and has been throughout the afternoon the motive of his walk. His companion, on the other hand, agrees to go along with him, not so much because he is interested in the house, although he is to some extent, but mostly because he loves a walk. He enjoys the exhilaration of the exercise; he is fond of the wood through which they have to pass. He will have a chance to hunt for the first signs of spring — the early skunk-cabbage, the shy peep of the violet through the dead leaves underfoot, the rose blush of the maples overhead, the piping and flicker of the first bird-arrivals and so on. The real motive of his walk is the joy of exercise and of the beauties met with on the way. Visiting the house was but an excuse.

There is the same distinction among painters. To some the representation of the incident is the main thing; to others, the rendering of the beauties which it involves. Vermeer, like the other Dutch artists, of the Seventeenth Century, belonged to the latter class. Since, however, his subject is the peg on which he hangs his arrangement of light and color, let us begin by examining it.

A young woman is standing between a table and a window. With one hand she opens the casement while the other grasps the handle of a brass pitcher that stands in an ewer of the same material. Perhaps she is going to water some flowers that are outside on the window sill. Her costume consists of a dark blue skirt, buff-colored bodice, and a broad collar and hood-like cap of thin white linen. The table is covered with an oriental cloth, on which is a yellow jewel case, while over the blue chair lies a cloak of lighter blue. On the gray wall hangs a map. This and the table cloth may remind us, that the Dutch of that period, although they were fighting for their political liberty



Young Woman Opening a Window, Johannes Vermeer

against Spain, found means to build ships and carry on trade across the sea with far distant countries. Possibly the girl was the daughter of some sea-captain or prosperous merchant.

Anyhow the picture, beside being a beautiful painting, is very interesting to us to-day as an illustration of the domestic life of a Dutch girl of some two hundred and fifty years ago. And the same interest belongs to all the old genre pictures. They make the past still alive to our eyes; just as the genre pictures painted to-day will show some future generation how we lived. But this, I repeat, was not Vermeer's first thought. On the other hand, I do not wish you to think that he was not himself interested in the subject of his picture. He was, I am sure; but in another way. He, no doubt, arranged the figure with great care and carefully selected and grouped the surrounding objects. But, in placing the girl, he did not try to get the graceful lines that Raphael, for example, would have imagined. Vermeer's desire was to keep the pose and gesture natural. In this he was simply following the general motive of the artists of his country and of that time. But his own particular motive in representing the girl in the act of opening the window was that the clear outside light might stream in at the back of her figure and blend with the dimmer light of the interior.

I said that we would study the kind of beauty that this picture possesses; and it is to be found in the rendering of the light. The Italians, busy with their grand classic compositions, would not have thought of this. Their motive was the beauty of form, arrayed in beautiful draperies, and so arranged that the figures should produce beautiful patterns of line and form. To make a motive of the beauty of natural light was a discovery of the Dutch.

They were artists, you see, and therefore in love with beauty. But they confined themselves, almost entirely, to real subjects of every day life, and accordingly had to find out the beauty that may be in these familiar things. And it was not long before they learned how much the beauty of things depends upon the light in which they are seen.

Before we go any further in our study of the picture, let us see if we cannot be sure of this from our own experience. Whether you live in a city or in the country, how differently you feel when you start out

in the morning, according as the day is fine or not. Under a bright sky everything takes on a cheerfulness that is communicated to our own spirit. Let the sky become downcast and the appearance of objects becomes dulled. Often too, some familiar object that we have passed time and time again without particular notice, suddenly attracts us. How beautiful! we exclaim. If we try to discover the reason of the beauty, we shall find very likely, that it is due to some effect of light. It need not be a bright light, on the contrary, it may be a soft light, such as wraps itself around objects like a gauzy veil, when the sky is thick with vapor. Do you remember that line of Tennyson's — "Waves of light went over the wheat"? He had been watching a field of wheat, spread out smoothly like a pale golden carpet in the yellow sunshine. Suddenly, a soft breeze passes over it, and as the stems bend their heavy heads of grain, and recover themselves, ripples of light travel across the field. The poet notes it in his memory, for a future poem. So, if we use our eyes, we may note countless examples of the beauty which is added to the simplest things by light. In fact, the changing effect of light will correspond to the changing expressions that pass over the human face.

The Dutch artists, as soon as they became really interested in the nature and life around them, quickly recognised this fact, and made it the chief motive of their pictures. They were no longer satisfied with mere realism; that is to say, to make the figure and the objects around it look as real in the pictures as they did in actual reality. They sought to render the expression of which these objects were capable, under the influence of light. If you do not understand this I think you will, if you place a bunch of flowers in some dark corner of the room, look at it a little while, and then move it to the window. Now, as the light falls upon the flowers and shines through the petals, the whole bunch is transfigured. It has taken on a new appearance of beauty. Like a face that has suddenly lighted up with an expression of happiness, the flowers seem alive with radiance. They too, have their expression and it will change with the changing of light. For look at them again toward evening, when the light is low, and their faces, not less beautiful, will show a quite different expression.

Now the light which streamed in at that window in Delft, when Vermeer painted this picture, was a very cool, pure light; one would

say, from seeing the original picture, a morning light in Spring, it is so pure and fresh and fragrant. Yes, one can even feel the fragrance of its freshness, so exquisitely has the artist suggested to us the impression of the lighted air that steals into the room, filling it with purity. See, how it bathes the wall; even the bare gray becomes radiant; how it gleams on the girl's shoulder, and filters through her cap, making it in parts transparent, so that one sees the background color through it. Note also, how it roams among the objects in the room, caressing the under part of the girl's right arm, bringing out the softness and plumpness of her left wrist; splashing the ewer and touching the pitcher, the table cloth, and other details with glints of sparkle, like notes of gladness in a melody of tender freshness.

Even in the reproduction one can feel the freshness that pervades the room, and the delicate quality of the lighted atmosphere that envelopes the figures and fills every part of the scene. I mean, that not only is this effect of light visible to our eyes, but it also stirs in us a sentiment or feeling of gladness and refreshment. Still more will the original, if you have a chance of seeing it in the Metropolitan Museum, 'New York, where, though a very small picture, it is one of the gems of the collection. For there you will feel also the effect of the color, yellow, gray, and various hues of blue. They are all cool colors, the blues especially, and very pure in hue, which increases the sensation of freshness.

A moment ago I spoke of the picture as being like a melody. It will suggest to some imaginations the blitheness of a spring-song. The fact that a painting may sometimes seem to have the tunefulness or harmony of music I have already mentioned in a previous chapter. The reason is that painting and music, although different arts, have certain elements in common. Later on, when we shall speak of color, I shall try to suggest to you the correspondence between sound notes in music and color notes in painting. But for the present I will remind you of an element, common to both arts, of which we have already spoken — rhythm. In Raphael's *Jurisprudence*, I pointed out to you the rhythm of movement in the figures. It flows through the forms of the figures in rippling, wave-like lines of direction. But nothing of that sort is apparent in Vermeer's picture. There are repetitions and contrasts in the arrangement of the full and empty spaces; but they

represent rather a pattern of spots; we are not conscious of any rhythm of line. Then, in what does the rhythm consist?

If you think of that line of Tennyson's — "Waves of light went over the wheat," you may perhaps discover for yourselves the kind of rhythm in this picture. To give you time to think it out, before I tell you, let me ask you, if you have noticed that in a flower-bed in the garden a number of blossoms of different colors will "dwell together in unity," but if you pick some of these and bring them indoors and begin to arrange them in a vase, the colors will seem to clash. That they do not appear to clash in the flower bed is because the out-of-door light envelopes everything, soothes the violence of the colors and brings them all into an appearance of harmony. Similarly in this picture, the light streaming through the window brings all the different spots of color into a single harmony of effect. They are no longer separate and independent, but drawn together and united by the veil of lighted atmosphere. Of this again, we will speak when we reach the subject of color.

But the rhythm of this picture, in what does it consist? Yes, in the movement, not of form, but of light. Uniting all the colors into a single harmony, it flows in and out through the lighter and darker parts of the composition; sometimes in a broad sweeping flood, as on the wall; sometimes in little pulses of movement, as it leaps from point to point; now losing itself in the hollow of a shadow, then reappearing in the gleam of a fold; all the while streaming through the picture in a continuous ebb and flow. In fact, as we study it, we gradually find that the light does for the parts of this composition what the lines of direction did in Raphael's — it unites them in a rhythmic movement.

Do not be disturbed, if at first reading these words convey little meaning to you; or if at first sight you do not feel the rhythm of the composition. It is there, however, and some day, if you are really going to be a student of pictures, you will feel it yourself.

For the present, if you will accept my word for it, I wish you to understand that this rhythmic effect of out-of-door light represented a new motive in painting. The Italians of the great period did not see it. It was the discovery of the Dutch realists, those artists of Holland in the Seventeenth Century, whose study was the real appearances

of nature and life.[6] Their pictures were not as grand as the Italians'; for they were small in size, and were not built up on the magnificently formal plan that gives such a dignity and distinction to the Italian pictures, nor are their subjects so heroic and impressive. They represent only the facts of every day life. Yet they have a great beauty of their own, because they rely on the inexhaustible beauty of light.

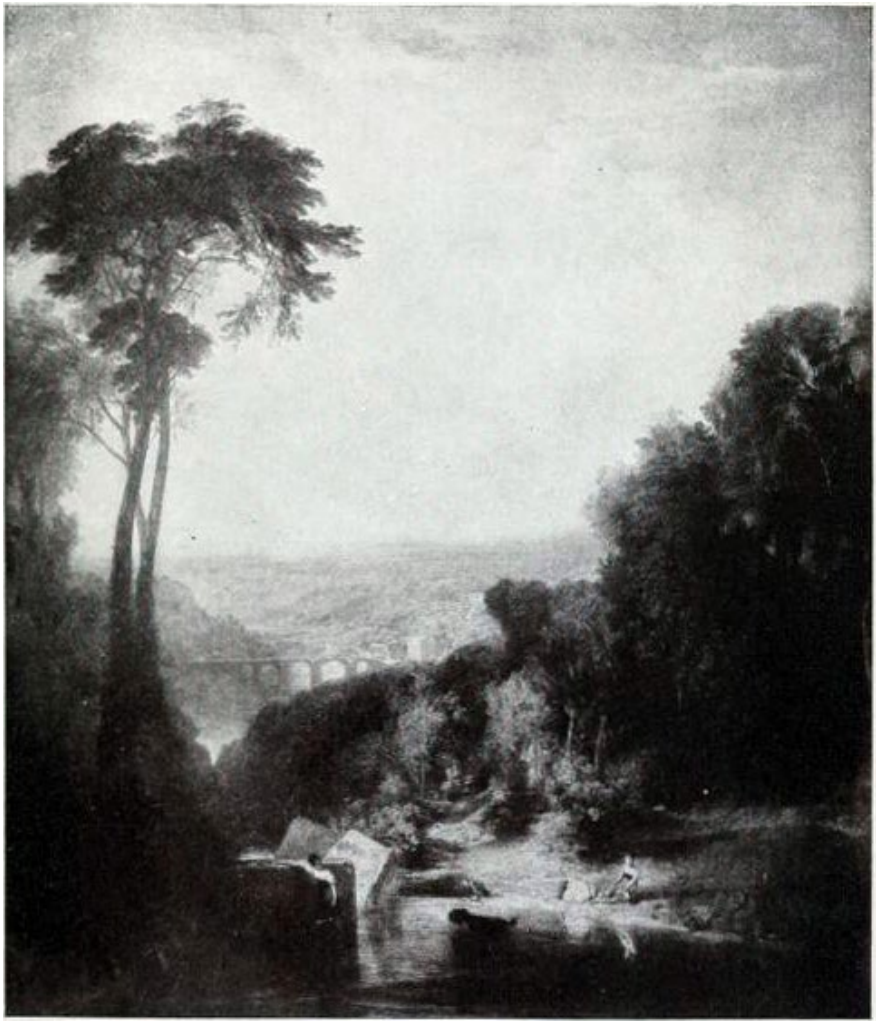
It is on this same beauty that after two hundred years artists of our own day are relying. They have gone back to the example of Vermeer and the other Dutch artists, and are applying it to the study of similar subjects. They are painting nature as it shows itself to them in its envelope of lighted atmosphere.

[6] We shall find it was discovered also by the Spanish artist, Velasquez, in the same century.

CHAPTER 11
The Naturalistic Landscape

We come now to the other arm of the Y, about which we spoke in a previous chapter. Landscape had been used as a background to the figures, until in the Seventeenth Century some artists began to make it the chief subject of their pictures. But no sooner was landscape painting practised as a separate art than it branched into two directions. We followed one of these and saw how Claude Lorrain invented the formal, or classic landscape; taking bits of nature, some from one place, some from another, and building them up into an artificial composition, which he made more grand by the addition of classic architecture. It was not unlike the way in which a handsome house is built; the materials — stone, wood, marble, and so on — are brought together from various places, hewed to certain shapes designed by the architect, and then put together according to the rule or formula of building. The main difference is that, though the classic landscape does not represent any actual spot in nature, it still bears a resemblance to nature. But it is nature worked over by the fancy of man, and improved according to his own idea of what is beautiful. The artist did not paint nature because he loved it as it is, but because it furnished him with material for making a handsome picture. And this picture-making use of landscape continued to be popular with artists and the public well on into the Nineteenth Century.

Meanwhile the other branch of landscape painting had been started in the Seventeenth Century by the Dutchmen. They, as we have seen, were interested above everything in themselves, their own lives and surroundings. This was the state of mind of the whole people, and the artists gave expression to it in their pictures. They too, were picture-makers, who by their skill of painting and their love of beauty made their pictures beautiful works of art. But the subjects that they represented were seldom imaginary ones. They painted what they actually saw; and with so much truth that their art has



Crossing the Brook, J. M. W. Turner

been called an art of portraiture. They made portraits of people, portraits of the outdoor and indoor life, and portraits of their towns and harbors, and of the country that surrounded them. So, by comparison with the formal or classic landscape, we may call their landscapes naturalistic, for they represented nature as it actually appeared to their eyes.

But their art died with them. As soon as Holland had secured her independence, her artists began to travel to foreign countries,

especially to Italy. There they set themselves to imitate the great Italians, and so far as landscape was concerned, joined in the popular taste for the classic kind. It was not until a hundred years later, namely at the end of the Eighteenth Century, that an English artist, Constable, revived the naturalistic style of landscape. He was a miller's son, whose boyhood had been spent amid the simple loveliness of nature. Later he went to London and studied painting; but while he worked in the big city, his heart was in the country, and he suddenly made up his mind to go back to the old scenes, and paint what he knew and loved. He had seen some of the landscapes of the old Dutchmen, and resolved that he would do what they had done. In his own words, he would be a "natural painter."

It was not long before the example of Constable led some of the younger French artists to study the old Dutch pictures in the Louvre. They were dissatisfied with the methods of painting upheld by the older artists. It seemed to them a waste of time to set up a model in a studio, and then, instead of drawing it as they saw it, to correct it according to some standard of perfection. Nor did they find any interest in putting a number of such figures into artificial groups, in order to build up some grand composition, supposed to represent some classical subject or story of the old time. They were full of interest in the life of their own time, which was the period following the Revolution, when France felt young again and vigorous, and the young artists and poets and fiction-writers were eager to express in their work their joy in the reality of life. When life was so real and so full of promise, why should they look back to the times of the great Italians and occupy themselves with the artificial and make-believe?

Among these younger men was one, Theodore Rousseau. He was not only independent in character and determined to see things with his own eyes and to represent them as he saw them and felt them, but he had a great love of nature. This led him away from the city into the country; where he studied the skies and the trees, and all the objects of the landscape with an ever increasing love and knowledge, until he came to know nature, as few have done, and to feel toward it, as a man feels toward that which he loves best in all the world. His favorite spot in nature was that which surrounds the Palace of Fontainebleau, an ancient residence some thirty miles from Paris, of

the kings of France. It is a rolling tract of ground, broken up with rocky glens and thick with forest trees, especially the oak. On the outskirts of this enchanting garden of wildness, in the little village of Barbizon, Rousseau made his home, and around him gathered other artists, fascinated by the beauty of nature. Among them was the Jean François Millet whose picture, *The Sower,* we have already studied. He for the most part painted the peasants, working in the fields or tending their flocks; but the others, among them Dupre, Corot, and Diaz, painted the landscape, while Troyon introduced cows into his pictures and Jacque, sheep. With all of them the motive was to represent nature as they saw and felt it. They are known as the Fontainebleau-Barbizon group of artists, and their example has had very great influence on modern art. I shall speak of it presently; meanwhile will continue the story of naturalistic landscape.

It is a very interesting fact that while these French artists were going straight to nature for their subjects and inspiration, some American artists, knowing nothing of the Frenchmen, were doing the same thing. A similar love of nature and longing to paint it as they saw and felt it drew them from the city to the beautiful spots that border on the Hudson River. Their leader was Thomas Cole, who made his headquarters among the hills and valleys, the waterfalls and luxuriant vegetation of the romantic Catskills. Other names are those of Thomas Doughty, Asher B. Durand, John F. Kensett. Sometimes they painted the grander aspects of the scenery; the broad Hudson sweeping past its headlands, or the lakes with their girdle of mountains; but quite as often the simpler loveliness of smiling meadows and cosy farms. But always with the sincere wish to represent, as faithfully as they could, the natural beauty that they loved.

Gradually, however, as the country expanded Westward and the pioneer spirit of the nation was aroused, American artists began to attempt bigger subjects. Church, Bierstadt, and Thomas Moran attacked the colossal wonders of the Yellowstone and the Rockies. It was no longer the beauty of nature that inspired them, so much as its marvelousness and immensity. As many people believe, they tried to do something that is beyond the power of painting to express. For on the comparatively tiny space of their canvasses they did succeed in expressing some of the appearances of nature's grandeur, but they

hardly made you feel it. I believe myself it is impossible that they should; for an artist can only make you feel in his picture something of what he himself has felt; and he must have thoroughly mastered his own feeling before he can express it. But in the presence of the stupendous works of nature, as far as my experience goes, the feeling masters ourselves. Amid the vastness of the height and depth and breadth and the grandeur and glory and marvel of it all, our spirit is swept out of us. We see the mighty volume of water coming over Niagara and hear the roar of its might; but not as we gaze into the face of a friend and listen to the voice that we have learned to know and love so well. In the one case our feeling is all brought to a center of attraction, in the other it is caught away and carried beyond our comprehension. We can only lose ourselves in wonder.

Well, artists discovered the truth of this. Constable and Rousseau lead the way, and now it is the usual habit of the landscape artists to study nature as one studies the face and form, the expression and action of a friend. One cannot know a number of friends as intimately as one or two. So they have confined their pictures to the few and simple aspects of nature; one little fragment at a time, studied with loving intimacy and represented with the faithfulness of sincere and thorough knowledge. In doing so, they have learned like Johannes Vermeer and other Dutch artists of the Seventeenth Century, that much of the beauty and almost all the expression on the face of nature are due to the effects of natural light. Light has become the special study of the modern painters of the naturalistic landscape. And they have carried it further than the other artists did. Helped by the scientific men, who have examined into the color of light, the modern artist has found out how to represent a great variety of the effects of light: cool or warm light, the light at a particular hour of the day, at a particular season of the year, and in a particular kind of weather. In fact, the light that he represents in his pictures is a faithful rendering of some one of the countless conditions of natural light.

You remember how the light in Vermeer's picture drew all the parts of the composition into a harmonious whole and gave it rhythm. So too, in these modern naturalistic landscapes the artist has ceased to depend upon line and form in making the composition. The latter is now rather an arrangement of masses of lighted color. We will talk

more about this when we come to color; for the present, it is enough to remember that we must not expect to find in modern naturalistic landscapes the same handsome patterns of composition that we find in the classical. The modern have less dignity, but a more intimate charm. We do not stand apart from the scene and admire it; we rather enter in to it and enjoy it. It is something with which we are familiar in nature, but we are made to feel a greater beauty in it through the personal feeling that the artist has put into his work. The French have a term for this kind of landscape, which well expresses the artist's motive and the feelings which his picture inspires in us. They call it the "*paysage intime.*"[7] Literally translated this means "intimate landscape"; but it may be rendered more freely a landscape in which we recognise how intimately the artist has studied his subject.

I have given you a sketch of the growth of naturalistic landscape in the Seventeenth Century up to our own day, when this branch of painting has become fully as important as that of figure subjects. Now let me briefly describe the change that has taken place in the motive of the landscape painter.

The motive, or aim of the early Dutchmen was to make their pictures resemble as much as possible the actual landscape. They were, as I have said, "portraits" of the natural surroundings. In their desire that the portraits should be lifelike these artists painted in as many of the details as they could. Moreover their point of view was objective. By "point of view" I mean the way in which they looked at the landscape; and I call it "objective," because they looked at it simply as an object in front of them to he painted as nearly as possible lifelike. This is the usual point of view of the modern photographer. You go to him to have your portrait taken. He poses you as an object in front of his camera. His aim is to make a portrait that will be like you, and will also please you because it is a good-looking picture. He will do the same for the next person that comes to him, and for the next, and so on. All of them are simply objects to be photographed. He has no personal feeling toward any of them; his point of view is objective. But, suppose he makes a portrait of his own child. He will wish it to be more than a likeness that any one would recognise. He wants it to

[7] Pronounced pa-ee-sahje an-teem.

be a reminder in after years, when she is grown up and changed, of how she used to look as a little one, in moments when to her mother and himself she seemed more than ever a darling. To him, you see, she is not merely an object to be photographed; his point of view towards his own child is not objective; on the contrary it is influenced by his personal love for her; the picture is to be a likeness plus something more — a reflection of his own feeling. This personal kind of point of view is called "subjective," the opposite to objective. Perhaps you will understand the difference between the two more clearly by the following sentence: "The photographer photographs Mrs. X." The photographer is the subject of the verb, photographs, "Mrs. X." is the object. In this case the object is of more importance than the subject because it is Mrs. X. "who pays the money and has to be considered. But change the words in this way — "The father photographs his little one." 'Now, so far as the taking of the photograph is concerned, the father is the more important. He is the subject of the verb, the one who is going to do something and do it his own way, so as to represent something which he, the subject, has in his mind. His point of view is entirely his own — the subjective. Observe how this will affect the way in which he takes the photograph.

The little one has just come in, we will say, from a romp in the meadow. Her hair is tumbled and the light plays through the silky strands; there is a sparkle of sunshine in her eyes; her lips are parted in a sunny smile as she stretches out to her father a podgy hand, tightly clasping a bunch of daisies. "Little love" he thinks to himself, "what a picture!" He seizes his camera, and tells her to stand still a minute. What is it, do you think that he is going to try and catch? I need hardly say it is the radiance in her face. Perhaps her podgy hand too; but first and chiefly that expression of happiness and love; for it is an echo, as it were, of the happiness and love that he feels in his own heart toward her. If he succeed, the picture will be as much an expression of his own subjective feeling toward the child, as of the child herself.

If you see what I mean you can now begin to understand how Constable, and, even more, Rousseau and the other Fontainebleau-Barbizon artists looked at nature. No longer an objective point of view, like the old Dutchmen's, it was a subjective one. To them

nature was not merely an object of which to make a portrait. It was something they loved, and, because they loved it, they painted it, and in such a way that their pictures embodied the feeling which they had for nature. They are full of the artist's personal feeling, or as it is sometimes called, sentiment. A landscape of Rousseau's sets our imagination working. It may represent an oak tree and a rocky boulder, half hidden in ferns and vines, some little spot in the forest of Fontainebleau. As we look at it we become more and more conscious of the strength and vigor of the tree; the firmness of its huge trunk, the mighty muscles of its brawny arms, the grip which it has upon the ground, and our imagination may begin thinking of the roots hidden, below the ground. While the branches spread out to the sunshine and the air, the unseen roots reach out and grip the soil and grapple with the rocks, anchoring firmly the tree against the storms of weather and time. And perhaps we begin to feel, as Rousseau himself did, that the oak is a symbol of the might of nature; and how she silently works on regardless of the changes that happen in the lot of comparatively short-lived men. Or we look at one of Corot's pictures of the twilight, in which the trees seem to have sunk asleep in blurs of shade against the pale, faint light that is fading from the sky; and the hush and tenderness of the daily miracle of nature's rest steals over our spirits. It is as if we were listening to the pensive melody of some sweet lyrical poem, very gently and reverently read; such a one, perhaps, as Longfellow's "Hymn to the Night." On the other hand, to receive an impression like that of Rousseau's picture, we must choose a poem that tells, not of rest, but of the grandeur of human effort, and must read it in a strong voice and confidently, as if we were sure that to be strong and faithful to the end was a grand thing.

Indeed, so many landscapes, not only by the Fontainebleau-Barbizon artists, but also by modern men who are following in their footsteps, are full of the suggestion of poetry, and we speak of them as poetic landscapes. This does not mean that they illustrate any particular poem, but that they affect one's imagination in somewhat the same way as poetry does. The reason is that such artists have the spirit of poets. For nature arouses in them deep emotions, and their pictures, like the poet's verses, not only describe the beauty of nature, but express the sentiment, or feeling, of their own souls.



Paysage, J. B. C. Corot

On the other hand, you must not expect to find this suggestion of poetry in all modern naturalistic landscape. There are still artists whose point of view, like that of the old Dutchmen, is objective. They are content to paint the beauty of nature simply as it shows itself to their eyes. Nor need we argue as to which is the better way, this, or the subjective point of view. We may prefer the one or the other; though, perhaps, it is better for us to keep our minds open to the beauties of both.

CHAPTER 12
Form and Color

When we began to speak about composition we continually used the words "line and form." Gradually, however, as we left the subject of formal composition and talked of naturalistic composition, we found ourselves substituting the words "colored masses."

It would seem then as if there were a distinction between these two things; that form was on one side of the fence and color on the other. Yet that would contradict our experience; for we know that everything which has a form or shape, visible to the eye, has also color that we can see. And most things that have color are seen to have a shape or form. Not all; for example, when the sky is a cloudless blue, or when we gaze over a distant expanse of sea. Still, as a general experience, color and form are identical. The face of a friend — you recognise it by its color as well as by the form of the features; and, should you have the sorrow of looking upon that face when it is dead, the change in the color would make you recognise the once familiar features as strangely different.

Yet, notwithstanding the identity of form and color, we find a certain separation between the two, when we come to study pictures. The reason is that some artists are more sensitive to form, others to color. As I have already said, an artist paints only the particular impression of an object which his eye receives. Every eye has its own particular way of seeing. Even the eye, most sensitive to form, will not see it as other eyes will; nor will any one color seem the same to every eye that is chiefly interested in color. This is only another way of saying that the varieties in nature are inexhaustible. Nevertheless, although no two elm trees are exactly alike, all elm trees are sufficiently similar to be recognised at once as elm trees. So with artists, some group themselves as painters of form; others, of color. In the old Italian days this distinction separated the artists of Florence from those of Venice. The Florentines — Leonardo da Vinci,

Michelangelo, Raphael, among the greatest — were masters of form; the Venetians, especially in the persons of Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese, were masters of color. The one group saw especially the shapes of things, the other saw the world as an arrangement of spots or masses of color.

The Florentines, in consequence of their interest in form, took great pains with the outlines of their figures. The outlines were clearly defined; in the mural paintings the figures were enclosed by an actual line; and always the figure shows distinctly against the background. For, having drawn the figure very carefully, the artist did not let the color, that was afterwards laid on, lap over the line or interfere with the subtle undulations of the outline. They were in fact, a school of great draughtsmen, who relied principally on the beauty and vigor of the drawing. The Venetians, however, were great colorists, relying on color; and may be spoken of as painters rather than draughtsmen. Yet they too, of course, were masters of drawing. They could represent the action of the figure as well as the Florentines, but unlike the latter, did not care for the clear outline. On the contrary, they softened or blurred the outline slightly, in closer imitation of nature.

If, for example, you look carefully at a tree, you will not find that its shape is enclosed by a hard line. The light creeps round the edges of the trunk and of the masses of foliage in such a way that the outlines are softened or slightly blurred. It is the same with a figure seated in a room; here and there its edges may seem sharply cut out against the background, but in other parts the edges will seem to melt into the background. In other words, as we look at the figure, what we are most conscious of is not its outline, but its mass of color in relation to the other masses of color that sur- round it.

Now, this distinction, between the way in which the Florentines and the Venetians saw and represented objects, still appears in modern art. In fact, ever since the days of the great Italians there have been artists who relied on drawing and artists who relied on color. Por over a hundred years the importance of drawing has been upheld by the great school of art in Paris maintained by the French government. One of its famous teachers, Ingres, used to tell his pupils "form is everything, color is nothing." Perhaps he only meant by this that, as long as they were pupils, the only necessary thing for them to think

about and learn to represent was form. Because to draw well is so important for any artist, and it is a thing that can be thoroughly taught and learned. The French school takes as its standard of excellence the perfect forms of classic sculpture and the great works of the Florentine artists. Although the student may be drawing from a living model whose form is not perfect, he is taught to correct the imperfections of this or that part, in order that the figure, as it appears in his drawing, may be as near as he can get it to classic perfection. But color, as we shall see presently, is so much a matter of each person's feeling, that it is impossible to reduce the teaching of it to any method or standard. So perhaps that is what Ingres had in mind. He meant that, for the time being, his students should consider form to be everything, color nothing.

On the other hand it is generally understood that he meant much more than this, that he was telling his pupils what he himself considered to be the whole duty of an artist. Let us try and enter into his point of view.

I can imagine some of my readers saying that the phrase, "form is everything; color, nothing," is nonsense; because color plays so important a part in our enjoyment of sight. Just think what a dreary world it would be, if everything, for instance, were a uniform gray! Quite true, and Ingres probably would have agreed. As a *man*, he no doubt enjoyed the pleasures of color. But it was as an artist that he was speaking. He was stating what he believed to be the proper subject of his own art.

In the first place he was evidently one of those artists who see the shape rather than the color of things; to whom form makes an irresistible appeal. In the second place — and mark, for this is very important — he was not thinking of how things appear in the actual world, but how they should be represented in art. He was one of those artists who are not interested in naturalistic painting; who do not profess to paint nature. On the contrary, like the great Italians, he only borrowed from nature certain materials in order to build them up into a formal composition of his own creation. He would have told you that he was not representing the works of nature but creating for himself a totally different thing — a work of art.

On the other hand, many artists will reply, that the work of art

need not be a totally different thing. That they themselves, like the Dutch of the Seventeenth Century and all the modern painters of the naturalistic composition, combine the two. It is by representing nature, that they create a work of art.

Here, you see, is a sharp conflict of points of view. One group of artists, loving nature, desires to represent it; the other, perhaps not loving nature less, certainly loves art more. This latter group, therefore, tries to improve on nature, and to use it only for the creation of something that it feels to be different and superior to nature. While the one set of men wed nature to art, the other divorce art from nature. Between the two there is a Great Divide, which no amount of talking can bridge over. The only conclusion to be reached is that there is right on both sides. For the one group, because of the kind of men composing it, its own way is the right way; and for the other, for the same reason, its way. We, as lookers on at the dispute, will do well to learn to see the beauty in both kinds of picture.

You may as well know the names by which the two points of view are known. With one, the *naturalistic*, we have already become acquainted. The other is called by the artists who practise it the "idealistic." They will tell you that they paint "ideal" subjects. By those, however, who disagree with them, their point of view and method are apt to be called *Academic*.

The word ideal, used in this sense, has the meaning "more perfect than in real life." When a person says: "The ideal way to spend a summer holiday" — we know even before he utters the next words, "would be," that he is going to tell us something that he does not expect to enjoy. It is how he would have things, if he could arrange them according to his own idea of perfection, now this is what the artist means when he calls his picture an ideal one.

Personally, I do not like this use of the word, because it seems to imply that this kind of picture is superior to the other. And the artists who paint this kind of picture believe that it is; we, however, who are simply students of pictures, longing to enjoy the beauty of all kinds of motive and ways of painting, will not admit this. We go back to the fact with which I started this book: that the value of a picture does not depend upon the subject but the way in which the artist has rendered it. Because a man portrays some noble incident from poetry

or the Bible, or invents some scene out of his brain, it does not follow that his picture will represent a higher degree of beauty or a finer imagination than one which only represents some simple scene in nature. I will go further and say that some of the pictures of "still life"[8] by the Frenchman, Antoine Vollon, or our own American artist, Emil Carlsen, exhibit more beauty, yes, and even more imagination than many ambitious figure subjects. Why is this? How can a picture of a pumpkin and vegetables by Vollon, or one of Carlsen's subjects, such as a creamy porcelain vase, and a lemon, and one or two other delicately colored objects on a white tablecloth, show more beauty and imagination than, for instance, an imposing picture like Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware*?

The answer is that Vollon and Carlsen exhibit more feeling for beauty and more imagination in matters that especially belong to painting, while Leutze went outside of painting. Let me explain myself. Leutze saw beauty in the heroism of Washington and his soldiers, fighting against tremendous odds for a great cause in the terrible cold of winter. His imagination was kindled by the importance of the cause and the devotion of those who fought for it. It was the facts, as they appealed to his mind, and the ideas that his mind formed about them which he tried to represent. But the special field for the artist, as I have already said, is not covered by his mind but by his eyes. It is with what he can see that he should be first and chiefly concerned — the beauty of the visible world. And his imagination as an artist is chiefly shown in the capacity that his mind has for discovering unexpected beauties and rendering them. Thus to ourselves, and even to some artists, a pumpkin may seem but a bright orange mass, with a rough or shiny rind as the case may be; an attractive spot of color and shape, a thing to be admired for a moment and then forgotten. Another artist, on the contrary, sees a great deal more in it. He sees subtle differences of color, according to the way the light falls on it, various delicate differences in the roughness or smoothness of the rind; curiously beautiful accidents of color as it reflects the colors of other

[8] Still life, or as the French call it "dead nature" includes, firstly, picked flowers, fruit and vegetables, and dead animals, and secondly, vases, pots, and other objects of man's handicraft.

objects near it; mysteries of shadow, some deep and strong, others so faint that an ordinary eye might not detect them. These and other qualities, that his sensitive eyes perceive, create impressions in his brain that fill his imagination with a sense of beauty somewhat as music does. He cannot tell you why he enjoys it so much, or explain in words the effect it has on his imagination. The whole impression is a vision of his imagination, excited by the sense of sight, and this vision he sets to work to interpret on his canvas, in order that it may be communicated to our eyesight, and, in turn, excite our imagination. We receive from form and color feelings of pleasure that we cannot describe in words but which are not less real on that account. It is an abstract enjoyment, free from any distinct connection with words or facts. On the other hand, in Washington Crossing the Delaware it is the record of facts, presented in the picture, that chiefly interests us. Neither the forms nor the arrangement of color have in themselves any separate abstract quality of beauty.

So, it is not upon the beauty of the things seen by the eyes, but upon the interest of things understood by the mind that Leutze depended. He really neglected his own proper field of painting, for that of the writer or orator. Therefore, he put himself at a disadvantage; for I think you will admit, that a good speaker or writer could describe the incident in a much more thrilling way than the picture does.

But we have strayed somewhat from our point. We were speaking of idealistic pictures, and noted that they are so called because the artist instead of representing nature as it is, corrects it and improves upon it in order to bring it up to what he considers an "ideal" standard of perfection. I mentioned that these pictures and the motive which prompts them are also called "Academic."

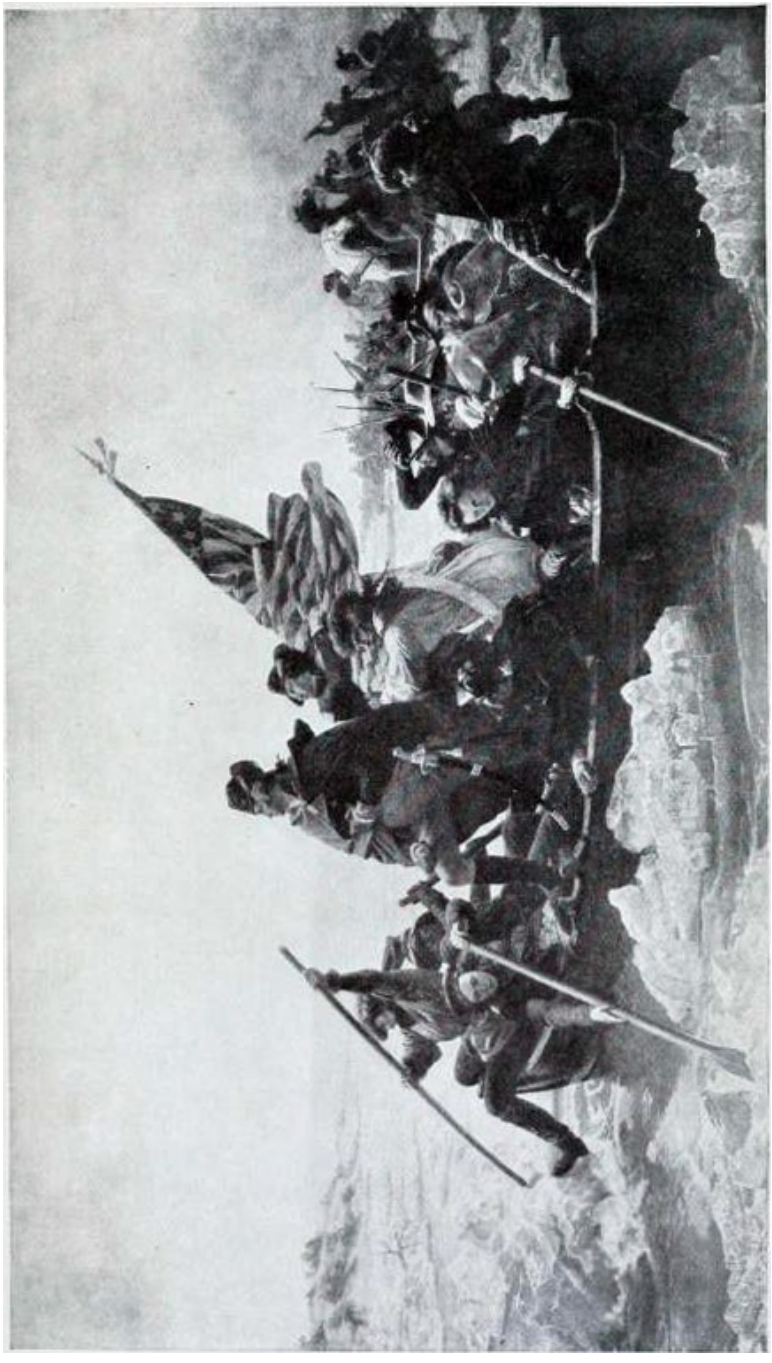
The reason is that the school in Paris which teaches these principles of painting is maintained by the Academy of the Pine Arts; and its example has been followed by many other European Academies of painting. So, when we speak of a picture being Academic in character, we mean that its motive and manner of painting follow the rules laid down by the schools. To repeat a word we have frequently used before, they are based on the Academic *Formula*. Previously it was the *Classic* formula of which we spoke. This, you remember was

the rule or plan for building up a formal composition, sometimes strengthened by the introduction of classic architecture and often representing some scene or story of classic legend. And it is upon this classic formula that the Academic practice is largely based. So when a modern artist paints a picture after the fashion of Raphael's *Jurisprudence*, we can speak of its manner and motive as being Academic, Classic, or Idealistic. Sometimes, in fact, the meaning of these words is practically the same, but not always.

For at times an Academic painter will choose an everyday subject of ordinary life, yet his picture will not be naturalistic. There are two ways in which he may miss the truth of nature. Either he will try to improve upon the actual facts, or he will leave out the light and atmosphere in which the objects appear in nature. We may find examples of both these contradictions of the natural truth in Leutze's picture. He was trained in the Academy of Dusseldorf, a city on the Rhine; at a time when that school had abandoned Classical subjects for incidents from history, or scenes from German legends, or what it called genre-pictures of peasant life. But these last were not genre in the sense that the old Dutch pictures were. For the latter reproduced the actual habits and life of the times, whereas the Düsseldorf artists presented fancy pictures in which the peasants were grouped, as if they were taking part in some scene in an opera or other theatrical performance. This artificial treatment appears in Washington Crossing the Delaware.

It is supposed to represent a historical incident. Do you think it has the value of history; that the incident really happened as it is here depicted?

The artist, of course, was not present; he was compelled to shape the facts of the incident according to what he had read about them, or, as I rather suspect, according to what his fancy had pictured them. History tells us that the crossing began early in the evening of December 25, 1776, and lasted until four a.m. the following morning. Does this picture represent the dimness of a winter twilight, much less the gloom of night? I might ask the further question, is any kind of natural light suggested in this picture? I feel confident the answer is "no." Leutze probably had no thought of representing this aspect of the truth; the Düsseldorf School paid no attention to the real



Washington Crossing the Delaware, Emanuel Leutze

appearances of light; or to the effect that light would have upon the appearance of the figures. Their outlines are sharply defined; every figure is rendered with about equal distinctness; no effort has been made to represent them in relation to one another, with varying degrees of clearness and obscurity. A similar artificiality appears in the representation of the ice. It is true the lights and shadows and gleam of the surfaces of real ice have been studied; so that the painting conveys the idea of ice; but this is a very different thing from the painted blocks representing the effects of real ice, as seen in real light.

So we find that Leutze, though wishing to give us a vivid representation of the incident, has neglected a number of important facts relating to the hour of the occurrence and to the conditions of atmosphere and light, as they must have affected the appearance of the scene. He was simply not interested in these matters. Then, what of the point on which he evidently relied — the grouping of the figures in the foreground? It is a ticklish job to pull a boat through a mass of floating ice-cakes.

Do you think that Washington and the flag-bearer would have increased the difficulty and peril by standing up? Don't you know that to stand up in a boat even on smooth water is a foolhardy thing to do? It is a frequent cause of accident and loss of life in pleasure parties. On an occasion so serious as this would the leader have been guilty of such folly? Certainly not. Washington and every man, not actually engaged in navigating the boat, would have been sitting low down, so as to help preserve the balance and offer as little resistance as possible to the wind. Here, then, is another indifference to facts in this so-called historic picture. But Leutze did not care about facts. His motive was to bring out the heroic character of the events. So he made Washington strike a heroic attitude. It is the way in which a popular actor takes the center of the stage and strikes an attitude and waits for the applause. Leutze wanted a central figure around which to build up his composition and, in order to support the central figure, reared another behind it holding aloft the flag. Thus he wins applause, at once, for the star actor and the patriotic sentiment of the scene. In fact his composition is similar in intention and arrangement to the grouping of figures on the stage of a popular theater. It is theatrical. I do not say dramatic, but theatrical, between which two ideas

there is this distinction. When we speak of a scene being dramatic we mean that the action of the plot has been vividly expressed by means that create an illusion of truth — that the characters behave as they might be expected to do in real life under the circumstances. By theatrical, on the other hand, we imply that the behaviour of the actors, instead of "holding the mirror up to nature," is regulated so as to produce an artificial effectiveness. Such a scene we call theatrical, or stagey. And the same words, in my opinion, can be applied to this picture. For Leutze failed to realise, not only that truth may be stronger than fiction, but also that it may be more impressive than artificial effectiveness. The true word spoken in simple earnestness, the true act done simply, often move men's imagination, where loud rhetoric and ostentatious conduct leave it cold. So, too, in a picture, a deeper sentiment may be aroused by simple truth of representation, than by a display of mock heroics.

In this picture, you will observe, we have been discussing the Academic point of view applied to the representation of an incident that really happened. The painter undertook a real subject, but has not rendered it as it would have really appeared to us, had we been there to see the event. This is a charge that can be brought against many so-called historical pictures, and against those smaller ones, the genre pictures, which are supposed to represent incidents of actual everyday life. When painted in the Academic manner they are not true to life, but artificially concocted.

On the other hand, as I have said, many Academic pictures, choosing classical or idealistic subjects, make no pretence of representing life. They try to improve on life by making their forms more beautiful than they actually are in nature; and build up compositions which must not be compared with the way in which people group themselves in real life. In such pictures we do not look for natural beauty but for that of the artist's own invention.

So, to bring the subject to a finish, we must bear in mind that there are two distinct ways of painting a picture. If the artist has tried to represent nature, we must learn to compare it with nature; if on the contrary, he has tried to paint a subject of "ideal perfection," we must not find fault with its unnaturalness. We may prefer the one or the other kind; but should not let our preference interfere with our

judgment of the different merits of each. Until we recognise the "Great Divide" between the Academic and the Naturalistic points of view, we shall not get very far in our appreciation of pictures.

CHAPTER 13
Color

It was mentioned in the previous chapter that artists may be divided into two classes: those who are particularly interested in the shape or form of what they see, and those who see the world as an arrangement of "colored masses." It is the latter way of seeing things that we are now going to consider.

We know that everything visible to the eye has color. When we think of a garden lane, an impression of green comes into our mind. Green, an artist would say, is the local color of the lawn — the general hue which distinguishes it from the paths and flower beds. There may be dandelions spotted about the grass; indeed it is a lucky lawn that is not overrun with them; yet, notwithstanding the yellow patches, the local color of the lawn is green. And this is true, although here and there the grass may appear yellow in the warm sunshine, or, where the shadows of the trees lie, may have a bluish tinge; or again, in the distance may appear to be almost gray. You see then, that when we begin to talk about color, we do. not think only of the general hue or local color, but also of the changes which take place in its appearance, according as it is subject to light and shadow or is seen near or further off.

Now let us take another case. A woman, we will suppose, has a quantity of white cotton material which she proposes to dye blue. She buys some indigo, and puts it in a tub of water. Into this dye-bath she plunges the cotton, and then hangs it on a line to dry. When she has taken it down and ironed it, it presents a uniform hue of blue, its local color. But what happens when she has made it up into a dress? The local color remains the same; but the appearance is no longer of a uniform hue. In some parts the blue is paler or whiter than the local color, in other parts darker; for now the material is not spread out smoothly, the light no longer falls upon every part of it in the same way. The skirt, for example, hangs in folds; and the full light strikes

directly only on the raised edges of the pleats. Into the hollow of the fold less light penetrates, and at different angles.

Just what do we mean by angle of light? We must remember that the rays of light coming from the sun, radiate or travel outward in straight lines, as the spokes of a wheel radiate from the hub; except that the spokes of light are not confined to a flat circle, but radiate in all directions from every part of the sun's orb. But to return to the wheel. Let us suppose that it is a buggy's wheel, and that the buggy is jacked up, so that we can turn the wheel easily. We will do so until one of the spokes is pointing straight down to the ground, and, to make sure that it is exactly vertical, we will suspend in front of it a string with a weight attached to its lower end. If the spoke follows exactly the direction of this plumb line, then we know that it is pointing down directly to the surface of the ground. We know, in fact, that the direction of the spoke is at right angles to the surface of the ground; or, which amounts to the same thing, we may say that the surface of the ground is at right angles to the direction of the spoke.

But what about the direction of the other spokes of the wheel? With them the plumb line will not help us. We must get a straight stick, say the handle of the stable broom. If we hold this along the direction of either of the spokes, nearest to the center one, we shall find that when the handle touches the ground, it will be at a point further off from the hub, and not at a right angle to the ground but at an acute angle. If we try the same experiment with the next spoke, we may need a longer stick, for the point where it reaches the ground will be still further from the hub, and the angle of direction will be still more acute. If we follow on to the next spoke, we shall probably find that its direction, when extended, does not reach the ground. It points above it. Perhaps it hits the barn wall; and then again comes the question: does it hit the wall at a right angle or at an acute angle? The answer to this, if you think a moment, will depend upon the position, not only of the spoke, but also of the wall. For example, the spoke may point directly at the wall, so that when you stand at the corner of the barn and run your eye along the wall, the spoke will make a right angle with the wall's vertical direction. But the wall has another direction — a horizontal one; and this may slope away from the direction of the spoke, so that if you stand in front of the wall,

your stick makes with it an acute angle. Evidently under some circumstances a single direction may make with the surface of the wall both an acute and a right angle.

By this time our experiment, which started out so simply, has become perhaps a little puzzling to follow. But I don't mind if it has; for I wish you to realise that, although this matter of direction and angles is simple in principle, it works out in a very complicated way. The more we realise this, the more we shall realise the wonderful effects of light upon color. As a beginning, let us imagine that the hub of the wheel is a center of heat, white-hot, and that the spokes are rays of light, not stationary like the woodwork but travelling outward at great speed. The shaft of light that runs straight down and strike the ground at right angles to the surface, would make the spot where it touches very bright. The second shaft, however as it reaches the ground further off from the hub will illumine the spot with less light. Moreover, since it hits an acute angle and is travelling fast, some of it will glance off the spot. It will be reflected from the surface back and forth, somewhat as a ball is tossed backwards and forwards from the hands of a group of children.

This fact of reflection and the fact that the so-called angle of reflection is the same as the angle of incidence, or, in other words, the angle at which the light falls upon the object, explains a familiar sight. Have you never seen, late in the afternoon, when the sun is above the horizon, a blaze upon a hill side, so bright that your first thought is it must be a house on fire? You saw it suddenly; and, if you walk a few steps to the right or left, it as suddenly disappears; to reappear, however, when you resume your former position. By this time you know it is not a fire, but the reflection of the sun from some window or tin roof. The light, striking down upon it, glances off, and, as you happen to be in the line of its angle of reflection, strikes you full in the eyes. But move your position, so as to get out of the "line of fire," and the reflected ray passes you by without attracting your notice.

Here is another example of reflected light, which you yourself can control. Do you remember the fairy Tinker Bell, in "Peter Pan"; how she appeared as a patch of light, dancing over the walls? Very likely when you returned from the theater you made her appear on the walls

of your home. As you sat at the breakfast table you picked up a tumbler of water, or a bright bladed knife, and moved it about until it caught the light and tossed it across the room on to the wall, where you could make the fairy hover by gently shaking the glass or knife. On the other hand by changing the position of the glass or knife you could cause her to disappear; to reappear if you wished it, on another part of the wall.

Now after considering the difference between direct and reflected light, let us go back to the blue dress. We were saying, you will remember, that the skirt no longer presented an appearance of uniform hue. For the local color of the material had become affected by the way in which the light reached the folds. On the raised edges the blue appears almost white; in the bottom of the hollows, where no light penetrates, it appears to be almost black. Meanwhile on the sloping edges of the folds there are varying degrees of lighter or darker blue, according as the material approaches nearer to the light, or recedes further from it. In other words, the light strikes the surfaces of the dress at different angles; there are varieties of reflections, and some parts of the skirt are almost entirely removed from the action of the light.

But all this time we have been speaking of light, and yet the subject of this chapter is color. Well, the reason is that color is light and light is color. If we were shut up in a cellar from which all light was excluded, we should see no color. Our eyes would experience no sensations of sight whatever, and, if we were left there a long time, our eyes, not being used, would probably lose their sense of sight. But, if after we had been in a cellar a little while surrounded by "thick darkness" as the old English expression is — meaning a darkness so opaque that the eye cannot penetrate it — the window shutter should be opened a trifle, then immediately our eyes would experience a sensation of color. The shaft of light, cutting across the darkness, would look white; but, if it hit upon a shelf of apples, our eye would receive a sensation of green or red or yellow. If light is color, why should it seem white in one case and some other hue in another? It is because in the whiteness of light are contained all the colors of which we are conscious. Very likely you know the experiment by which the truth of this is shown. Supposing you are still in the cellar

and place in the pathway of the shaft of light a prism — that is to say, a bar of glass not round or square, but triangular — what will happen? The glass being transparent, the light will pass through it. But not in a straight line; for, as it hits one of the sloping surfaces of the prism, it will be bent out of its course; and then, as it reaches the opposite sloping side, it will again be bent into another direction. So the light in its passage through the prism wall have been twice bent out of its original direction; and, when it emerges, it will be no longer a single shaft of white light, but will appear as a broad band of many colored lights; red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet. We may call this succession, a scale of color lights. They correspond in hue and order to the bands or scale of colored lights in the rainbow, for the latter is the result of an act of nature, which on a very large scale is like our experiment with the prism. Only nature's prism is formed by a bar of rain on which strikes a shaft of light through a slit in the thick upper clouds.

With this scale of colored lights scientists have made delicate experiments. They have analysed the colors more exactly; discovering, that is to say, the distinct degrees of color, for instance, between the red and the orange, as the one passes into the other; and again between the orange and the yellow, the yellow and the green, and so on. Then, after discovering the succession of monochromatic tints, as they call them, by optical instruments, they have tested the power of the human eye to discriminate, or detect the difference between these various tints. Notwithstanding that the difference between the latter is so slight, they have found that the eye is sensitive to something like two million monochromatic tints. I mention it not to trouble you with figures but to stir your imagination; for such a fact should fill us with admiration not only of the marvellous qualities of light but also of the marvellous capacity of the human eye. It helps us to begin to realise the miracle of light and the immense field of study that lies open to the artist who is a colorist, to whom, that is to say, it is the color of the visible world that most appeals.

Light, then, contains within itself all colors. When light falls upon an object, for example, a leaf, the latter absorbs some of the colors of the light and throws off others. The part thrown off in the case of the leaf is what we call its color: green, or it may be greenish yellow, or a

bluish green, or in autumn, crimson. Every substance has this power of absorbing some of the light and of throwing off the rest; and it is the different chemical properties of different substances that decide which of the colors of light they will absorb and which they will throw off; or, as we say, causes them to be a certain color.

We have spoken of the human eye being sensitive to an immense variety of colors. Let us consider the meaning of sensitive. In the first place, the eye receives an impression that causes it to telegraph to the brain a record of the hue; but it means more, for the word sensitive implies a capacity to feel. In some way or other the brain receives an impression of feeling. Just how it does, I understand, is not known; but scientists tell us that these impressions of sight, while they are not quite similar to the feelings aroused by sound, have something in common. Just as some sounds give pleasure while others are disturbing, so with colors — we receive from them sensations of pain or pleasure. According to the degree of our sensitiveness to sound or color our feelings are aroused. It may be only slightly, or it may be more intensely. It is pleasant, for example, to hear the sound of the robin's note, and, as we peep out of our bedroom window to look at him, we may catch sight of the yellow or red notes of color that the tulips are beginning to make against the dark earth. They too will give us pleasure. And in both cases our pleasure may go no further than just a little enjoyment of their note of color or sound. Or, on the other hand, they may stir our imagination. We recognise their notes as the first signs of spring. Nature in her mysterious way has whispered alike to the robin and the tulip that the rigor of winter is over; that spring is come with its birth of new life, bringing beauty and happiness in its train. And in ourselves, as we recognise the notes of spring, life leaps up with a new sense of the beauty and happiness of living. Those notes, in fact, which began by giving only simple pleasure to our ear, have stirred ideas in our minds; they have become associated in our imagination with a fuller and higher sense of life.

On the other hand, some notes of sound distress us. The unexpected discharge of a gun may strike us unpleasantly; the roar of the wind and the rain against the window fill us with melancholy; the cry of a creature in pain, even before we know whence the cry comes or the reason of it, may cut us like a knife. I mean, that sounds, quite

apart from any definite thoughts that we associate with them, may hurt us. So may colors. I might illustrate this by saying that sometimes when we enter a room the color of the carpet, perhaps green with red roses as big as cabbages, and the color of the furniture, which may be of gold upholstered in blue, seem to start up and hit us a bang in the eye. But perhaps you like smart colors, so I will offer another example. Shakespeare said —

> She never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,
> And with a green and yellow melancholy,
> She sat, like patience on a monument,
> Smiling at grief.

Shakespeare's opportunity of seeing pictures had been very limited. In fact, I am sure that he was not thinking of pictures when he described melancholy as "green and yellow." Either he had an instinctive dislike of this combination that probably he could not have explained; simply he felt it to be disagreeable; or he may have associated it in his imagination with something he had observed. Perhaps for instance, since he speaks in the next line of a "monument," he may have been thinking of the green and yellow stains on old tombstones, so that "green and yellow" suggested to him the very opposite of "damask cheek" with its rosiness of healthy life; in fact the signs of wasting and decay. Anyhow, to Shakespeare's imagination these colors represented something disagreeable. That is the point. Colors, like sounds, may excite feelings of distress or pleasure.

And, if single notes may give pleasure, how much more a number of them. It is when a number of them are combined into a composition that a harmony is produced. The musician creates a harmony of sound, the painter a harmony of color. The secret of a harmony is the relation, that the separate notes of sound or color in it bear to one another. If I try to explain this, it is not because I wish to tell you how to make a color harmony, but because I hope the explanation may help you to enjoy it. Perhaps we may get an idea of what relation means if we think of a football team. It consists of a number of individuals with separate duties. Some play forward, others half-back,

quarter-back, and so on. When each member not only does his own work as well as possible but plays well into the hands of the other members, we speak of the excellence of the team work. And in nine cases out of ten it is not brilliant individual play, but fine all-round teamwork that wins the game. The different members are so well related to one another, that the whole team works harmoniously.

It is similar in a harmony of colors. For perhaps you see that what I wish you to understand is not that a few bright colors make a harmony, but that it is the result of a combination. There must be teamwork among the colors. They count as individual spots of color, but still more in relation to all the other colors. There may be one or more crack players — I mean predominant[9] notes of color, — but they will have colleagues or assistants — colors of the same hue but differing in degree — which will repeat or echo their effect, with variations all over the canvas. These subordinate colors and the crack ones will play in and out, backing one another up, and, as it were, passing the ball backward and forward into one another's hands; acting in such exact relation to one another, that their efforts result in a perfect harmony of effect.

But so far we have been thinking only of one team, working out its scheme of attack and defense in practice play. There is a more complicated play, namely, when the team is pitted against a rival team. So in color. An artist will introduce rivalry, or competition into his color scheme; namely, two crack notes of color that, seen by themselves, would produce a disagreeable sensation. Why does he do so? Because he knows the value of contrast and discord; just as you know it is more fun to watch a game of football between two well-matched rival teams than the merely practice play of one of them. For now the artist is pitting one set of colors against another set; the crack players on both sides and their backers-up — the colors of different but closely related hue; and the game between them is fast and furious — an interplay of likes and unlikes, of repetitions and of contrasts. The excitement of the game results from the even balance of the two rival sets of colors, swaying backward and forward over the gridiron — I mean the canvas — massing here and there, then

[9] Showing a mastery over others.

scattering in a burst of animation — the two teams so evenly matched that their rivalry only makes the give and take of the game more brilliantly harmonious.

Such, in a way, is the harmony of color, as it appears in the pictures of a true colorist. It has a focal point of intensity where the effect is massed, but all about it, scattered over the canvas, is the interplay of related similarities and contrasts, all of which combine into a harmonious whole.

It may help you, as it has helped me, to understand the combination of these numberless repetitions and contrasts of color, if I tell you of an experience of sound that I remember. I was one of a party walking in the Swiss mountains, and at a turn in the path we came upon a man, sitting with a gun across his knees. For a small amount this mountaineer was prepared to let off his gun. We paid, he fired. There was a sharp report — a focal point of sound — then a neighboring mountain side sent back an echo, which was caught by another that sent it back, whence again it was re-echoed from another mountain peak, and so on, back and forth, until in a moment or two, the whole mountain world resounded with a wondrous roar. From a single note of sound, which made a very slight impression had grown a multiplication of slightly differing sounds. For the first echo was slightly different to the original note, and then again the echo of this echo differed slightly, so too the echo that came next and the one that followed that, and so on through a scale of slightly varying tones, that finally merged into one huge swell of throbbing sound, as of some mighty organ music — a harmony of tumult. It was a wonderful sensation, and has helped me to realise the wonder of color harmony. For an artist generally founds his color scheme upon one or two notes of color, and then by representing the echoes of these colors, as they are reflected at different angles from the various planes of surface, gradually elaborates or works out a maze of related colors that merge into a harmony.

On the other hand it is not only by painting the interplay of reflections that an artist produces a harmony of color. There is a less complicated way, represented in Japanese prints and paintings, and in the work done by some of our artists who have adopted their method. In this case the color is flat; the objects, that is to say, are

not modeled by lights and darks. The form, instead of being actually represented is only suggested. Consequently there are no reflections and the colors are laid on flatly and smoothly. But they are most carefully related to one another; both in quantity and tint. The artist, for example, may use only rose and lavender and black. But his sense of color is first shown in his choice of the particular tints of rose and lavender and black, and then secondly, in his distribution of these on the white paper. Perhaps he determines to make the black his crack player. But he wishes to produce a balance of harmony of all his colors, so he carefully considers how large a space the chief spot of black shall occupy, and then what quantity of the remaining spaces shall be occupied by the rose and lavender and the white paper. Having thus worked out the ground plan of the scheme, he may elaborate it by repeating some of the black in other parts of the picture, and by introducing echoes of the rose and lavender in the large spot of black. The echoes, in this case, you observe, are not reflections, they are simply repetitions in smaller quantities of the colors of the main spots. His composition, in fact, is a pattern of main spots, and their echoes; the whole presenting a unity and harmony because the colors are in exact relation.

And when this has been done either in a simple harmony or a more elaborate one, with the true feeling of a colorist, no alteration can be made in any part of the picture without producing a discord, destroying, that is to say, the exquisite balance of the whole. I mean, that if, for instance, you were to cut off a part of the picture in order to make it fill a frame, you would destroy the harmony of the whole. For now the relation of the colors will have been disturbed. There is no longer the same balance in the quantity of each, nor do they occupy the same related position in the composition.

In a word, as we said above, the secret of color harmony is the relation of the separate colors to one another and the whole.

CHAPTER 14
Color (Continued)

Values — Subtlety

So far in our talk on color we have laid stress on three points: first, that color is light; secondly, that color is affected by light; thirdly, that the painter who is a colorist arranges color in relation to other colors, so as to produce a harmony.

The reason was, that I wished you not to think of color as paint. Paints, or as artists call them, pigments, are only the materials that man has invented to imitate the real thing. The real thing is nature's color. Pigments we will speak of later.

Prom early ages man has been attracted by nature's colors and has tried to imitate them in order to brighten up his own person and his surroundings. He began by smearing his own body with some form of dye or pigment, either to make himself more attractive or to strike terror into his enemies. As he became more civilised and learned to weave wool and cotton and flax, he dyed his blankets and clothing, and added gay borders and patterns to the local color. Growing more skilful in the fashioning of clay pots, and bows and arrows, and other articles of war and domestic use, he decorated them with colored designs. Little by little he learned how to imitate the beauty of nature's coloring. But, at first, it seems to have been the brightness of color that attracted him; just as to-day, a great many children and, for that matter, grown-ups as well, prefer gay colors. Manufacturers and merchants know this. Accordingly, to suit the taste of a great many customers who still have the primitive child-man's love of gay-colored things, they fill the markets with gaudy-colored carpets and wall-papers, and gaudily upholstered furniture, gaudy curtains, cushions and so forth. And people buy them, so that thousands of households are furnished in a way that to any one who love's nature's coloring, seems horrible. Yes, this is a strong word. But if you will

believe me, not too strong to express the feelings of distress that such parlors excite in people whose taste is more civilised. They are as much distressed, as if the parlor were filled with roosters, parrots and monkeys, all crowing, and screeching and chattering together in a horrible discord of sound.

Perhaps you do not like my hinting that people who prefer these noisy colors are not yet fully civilised. You have been taught that we are living in a very civilised age, with all sorts of modern improvements that the people of the past never thought of, much less enjoyed. This of course is perfectly true. Science and mechanical inventions have made living easier; travel is cheaper, education has advanced, books are within the reach of everybody and, best of all, we have more pity for the poor, and the sick and the afflicted, and try to make their lot less terrible. Yes, and in thousands of other ways we are more civilised. Yet, even so, we may be far from enjoying all the opportunities of civilisation that this wonderful age offers.

How many girls and boys, I wonder, who have enjoyed the benefits of a good education, when they reach the age in which they can choose for themselves what they will read, select the best books? I mean by the best books, those that in history, poetry, biography, travel, science, and fiction, really give us the best kind of knowledge of men and life. Are there not thousands of readers who are satisfied to read nothing else but the latest novel, no matter how trashy it may be? Thousands, indeed, who are not bettering their minds and lives, as really civilised people should try to do; but allowing the garden of their hearts and souls to become laid waste and barren, just as your flower garden would soon be, if you turned loose in it the poultry and the pigs.

The truth with such readers is, that, though they enjoy the blessings of civilisation, they have missed one of civilisation's finest products. They have not *good taste*, their *taste* is *bad*. And bad taste is like a poison. If it is allowed to remain in the system it will in time affect the whole body. None of us can make a habit of reading trash without sooner or later becoming trashy and cheap and commonplace in our thoughts, conversation, choice of friends and conduct.

However, as you are reading this book, I hope it is a sign that you do not care for trashy reading. So let us get back to the subject of

taste in matters of color. If one looks back over the past, there is no doubt that as people became more civilised, one of the ways in which they showed improvement was in color taste. They gradually ceased to be attracted only by the brightness of color; they began to find beauty in the relation of one color to another; to try to produce a harmony of colors.

I wonder whether, as you have been reading, it has occurred to you to think: Why does the author object to bright colors? He says we learn to love color by studying nature's coloring. Are there not bright colors in nature? Is it wrong to like them?

Certainly not; nor do I object to bright colors. I am often delighted with them. But, in the first place, bright colors do not look the same in nature as they do in a parlor. Secondly, art, as we have said before, is different to nature. The artist does not imitate everything he sees in nature, but from it selects this and that to make his work of art.

Nothing in our garden makes a brighter spot than the giant poppy. Its wide and flaring crimson cup, stained with the purple of its stamens, burns like a flame. I love the brave show poppies make, ranged at intervals along the borders or massed in a clump with a setting of greenery around them. For, to prevent their brilliance overpowering the garden, they need plenty of space and abundance of contrasting colors. I cannot imagine anything more noisy and gaudy than a little yard entirely filled with them. The reason they need space is that they may be surrounded with plenty of atmosphere. It is this which makes so great a difference between effects of color out of doors and indoors. Out of doors the atmosphere acts like a veil, softening the sharpness of colors and forms and helping to draw them together into a unity of effect. It is indeed, more like a succession of veils, for between us and nearby objects is a certain amount of atmosphere; while objects further off, and still further off, and further off still, are separated from us by continually increasing quantities of atmosphere. And these planes of atmosphere, as we called them in Chapter 4, act like veils of gauze through which everything is seen. As I have said, they help to subdue the colors and draw them into relation with one another, and so suggest an effect of harmony. In a room, however, especially a small one, we cannot get far enough away

from objects to permit much atmosphere to come in between. There is not so much distance to lend enchantment to the view. Consequently, though we may enjoy the beauty of a few of those poppies in a bowl on our table, we should find a carpet or curtains or sofa of the same color much too gaudy and overpowering. The effect would be much as if, while the piano was being played, someone should blow loudly on a tin horn. The noise would disturb the harmony of the music; we should shut our ears or turn the tin horn disturber out of the room. So when we enter a gaudily furnished room, we should like to shut our eyes to the discord of color, and, if we had our way, would banish the disturbing objects to the junk-shop.

But now for the second reason why some of nature's colors, beautiful in themselves, may be less so when introduced into a room or picture. For the furnishing of a room, like the composing of a picture, should, as far as possible, be a work of art, and the artist, as you recollect, does not imitate nature. He selects from nature. Out of her unlimited storehouse of form and color he chooses for his purpose some few effects at a time and combines them in his work of art; guided in his choice and arrangement by the principles of beauty he has discovered in nature, particularly by the principle of harmony. And in this respect he has an advantage over nature. For the light and atmosphere cannot choose the colors and objects which they help to harmonise. Even after they have done their best, there may be so many of those poppies that, while their colors are subdued and brought into some relation with the other colors, the relationship is still too distant — the difference between the two colors too wide — to produce a perfect harmony. But the artist, since he can pick and choose what he will put into his picture, is able to avoid this difficulty; just as a young couple when they start housekeeping can generally avoid having things that will disturb the harmonious arrangement of their parlor. I say "generally," for sometimes, notwithstanding their own taste, they receive from some kind but tasteless friend, the present of a piece of furniture that plays the tin-horn to all their ideas of harmony. This is a hard case. They do not wish to offend Mrs. So-and-so or Aunt Jane, and yet they do not like having to live with something offensive to their own feelings!

We have said so much about the artist working for a harmony of

colors that I ought to warn you that you will not see color harmonies in all pictures. For a great many painters are not colorists. Bouguereau, for example, was interested chiefly in form. If he represented a young girl, drawing water from a well, he painted her flesh pink; her dress, perhaps, blue; the stone-work of the wall, gray; the wood work of the bucket, brown; and, if there was a bush in the picture, of course, painted it green. His only purpose in choosing this color or that color was to represent the general appearances of the figure and other objects. He only *saw* color, never *felt* it. He never even saw it, as it really is; or he would hardly have painted all his girls and women the same kind of pinky or creamy china-color. In fact, color to him was quite unimportant. If he could *draw* the girl beautifully he was satisfied. So it is beautiful form we must look for in his pictures; the color does not count.

Then there is another kind of painter; Vibert, for example, whose pictures were popular in this country. He liked to paint a cardinal in a scarlet cassock, either in or out of doors. The scarlet makes a big bright spot in the pictures. Vibert was evidently fond of color; but in a very crude or unrefined sort of way. He had the primitive man's or child's fondness for gay or brilliant hues; and since there are many people with the same child-like instinct, he sold his pictures easily. He too, for the most part only *saw* color. Or, if he felt it at all, only in the very simple way of liking one color better than another. Color never stirred in him deep feelings. He never felt it as a musician feels sound. He never wove the related colors into a harmony. He was a gay painter, but not a colorist.

I wonder whether you are beginning to understand the difference? What I have said may help to point the way to an understanding, but no amount of reading can make you feel the beauty of color, or enter into the feelings of an artist who is a colorist; and enjoy his work. This you can only do for yourself by using your own eyes. Nor do I mean by this that you should now and then look at a picture, or once in a while open your eyes to the beauty of nature. What I suggest is that you should get into the habit of keeping your eyes open to the beauty of the world. If you do, you will have your reward. And the more you watch out for beauty, and so train your feeling and taste, the more you will discover beauty in unexpected directions.

Especially you will find that some of the most beautiful color harmonies are made up of colors, that a little while ago you would not have felt to be beautiful.

It is not difficult, for example, to enjoy the beauty of nature's coloring when the sun is shining brightly. But, because it is so easy, some painters who are colorists will not care to represent it in their pictures. They will wait for what they call a gray day — when the sun is hidden behind clouds of mist. Or, like Corot, they will prefer the early morning or late evening, when the sky is very pale, and the colors of nature are very subdued. Or, like Whistler, who painted *The White Girl*, a girl in white, standing on a white rug in front of a white wall, they will choose some subject in which the difference between the colors is very slight. In a word they are looking, not for splendid but for subtle harmonies. Those grand Venetian colorists of the Sixteenth Century, Titian, Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese, and the great Flemish colorist of the Seventeenth Century, Peter Paul Pubens, for the most part gloried in harmonies of splendour, Velasquez, however, Rubens's contemporary, whose life was spent in the service of Philip IV of Spain, proved himself to be one of the world's greatest colorists by the soberness and subtlety of his harmonies. A large part of his work consisted in painting the portraits of the King, the Royal Family, and the chief State officers. The taste of the Court was opposed to bright colored costumes; indeed the prevailing colors were black and gray, with occasional touches of relief, such as blue or pale rose. Yet out of these few colors he made wonderful harmonies. To his sensitive eye a black cloak was not a mass of thick darkness. As the light shone upon the various surfaces at different angles, he discovered all sorts of nuances, as the French say, or shades and degrees of lighter and darker black, in fact, a scale of tints out of which he composed a harmony. It was the same way with the grays and drabs. We often call these neutral colors, by which we mean that there is no particular color in them. But Velasquez did not look at grays and drabs in this way. Having to paint them he searched them for possibilities of beauty, and found them in the nuances, occasioned by the action of light. And out of the scale of these nuances he composed harmonies.

To these nuances artists have given a name — values. We know the ordinary use of the word. It represents the relation of something



Prince Balthazar Carlos, Velasquez

to a certain fixed standard. Thus, we take a dollar as a standard; and say the value of this knife is fifty cents, or of that two dollars. These knives differ in value; or, on the other hand, we may have two or more knives that correspond in value. Or, again, if some of you are arranging a picnic as a Dutch treat, one of the party may undertake to bring ten cents' worth of eggs, another ten cents' worth of crackers, and so on. Though every one of twenty boys and girls brings something different, the value of each contribution is the same.

Now applying this to colors, you may see that the point to which I am leading you is this. Just as the knife varies in value from other knives, so may one tint of black vary from another tint of black; one tint of red from another tint of red; one tint of yellow from another tint of yellow. Equally, since a certain quantity of crackers may have the same value as a certain quantity of cheese, so may a certain tint of red have the same value as a certain tint of yellow. But what is the standard by which one kind of color can be compared with another?

The standard of value adopted by a painter, is light. The value of any color depends upon the amount of light reflected from it. Thus, if you look at a man dressed in black, you will notice that the black upon the shoulder, or the chest, or whatever part receives the greatest quantity of light, will seem less black than those parts which receive less light. And it may be only in the hollows or shaded parts that the black looks really black. Well, each one of these separate degrees of black represents to the painter a separate value of black.

Perhaps you will say — Why this is only a repetition of what was said about the painting of reflections of light and the shadows on the blue skirt! You are right. Then — why, you ask, this new term — values? Well, it was when the modern man discovered that the painting of these reflections and shadows could be made a means of producing harmonies of color; that, indeed, harmonies could be produced out of the reflections alone, that they invented this new name. They had discovered a new principle of harmony, depending upon the varieties of light on color, and they gave to these varieties the new name of values. Not that the principle was really a new one. It was an old one discovered by Velasquez and at the same time by

the Dutch — Vermeer among them.[10] But about 1860 some modern artists from studying the works of these men made a new discovery of the principle.

Before discussing the importance of the rediscovery, let us turn back to the other use of that word values. If you remember, the word is used not only of the differences in degree in tint of some one color; for example, the different values of black, of green, of red and so on, but it is also used as a standard to compare a color of one hue with a color of another hue. Let me remind you of that Dutch treat picnic to which everybody brought a contribution of equal value. I need not tell you that the ten cents' worth of soda crackers will make a bigger parcel than the ten cents' worth of cheese, while ten cents' worth of ——'s "fine chocolate" would make a very small parcel indeed. Now, colors differ in the same way. All colors throw off a certain quantity of light, but the amount varies.

You remember, we said that the cause of color was the fact, that light which is made up of all colors penetrates every object in nature; that each object absorbs a certain quantity of the color and throws off the remainder. And that this remainder is what appears to our eyes as the color of the object. But while we think of this remainder as color, do not let us forget that it is light. And, recollecting that color is light, we can understand that one color has more or less light in it than another.

I wish to make sure that you do understand this, so let us try to illustrate it. We are in the habit of estimating things by percentage. Suppose then that we think of the light of the sun as representing one hundred points. Scientists have discovered that objects which we call yellow absorb only some twenty of these points; that, in fact, the quantity of light thrown off by what we call yellow, or in other words its value, is some eighty per cent. What we call red, however, represents some sixty per cent, of light; green, about forty per cent.

Now supposing an artist wishes to combine these colors in a Dutch picnic; if he wishes, that is to say, to combine these colors so

[10] Turn back to his picture and see how all this that we are now discussing is there illustrated.

that they will contribute equally to the whole composition of color. He will use a great deal less yellow than red, and less of either of these colors than green. The packet of green, like the crackers, will be bigger than the cheese, or red; the yellow, or chocolate, smallest of all.

Let us imagine a picture that will illustrate this. But before we do so I must remind you that what we are talking about is color harmonies, and particularly those harmonies of color in which the modern artist delights. He learned them, as I have said, from Velasquez, who was debarred from using brilliant colors, he learned them also from the old pictures of the Dutchmen, like Vermeer; lastly he learned them from studying the pictures and prints of the Japanese. The effect of all these examples was to make him prefer subtlety to splendour.

I have already explained the meaning of subtlety and subtle. Both are derived from a Latin word which means "finely woven" — fine spun threads of silk or linen, woven closely together into a strong but very delicate and thin fabric. So when we speak of a subtle distinction we have in mind a distinction that is very slight; as between two tints of yellow. To many eyes they will seem the same; whereas an eye more subtly sensitive to degrees of color can distinguish the difference. We may say of such an eye, that it has a very delicate sense of sight, or subtlety of vision. Subtlety implies delicacy; and when we speak of the subtlety of an artist's color harmonies — how subtle they are — we have in mind a delicate, exquisite, refined use of color. He has not used many colors; nor obtained his effects by force of strong contrasts. On the contrary, it is by subtle relation of a few colors, by the subtle differences in their values that a harmony, distinguished by its exquisite delicacy, is produced.

Our own American artist, the late James McNeill Whistler, was one of the first of the modern artists to paint this sort of harmony. He painted four pictures of a girl in a white dress, which he afterwards entitled "Symphonies in White," numbering them one, two, three, and four, just as a musician's works are distinguished by a number. For Whistler felt that there is some similarity between the harmonies of color and those of sound notes, and tried in his pictures to produce subtle effects as musicians do. In one of this series he represents the girl in a white dress, standing on a white rug, before a white wall. The

only variation from the white is afforded by her dark hair and the flesh coloring of her face and hands. These are what we may call "accents" — notes of color that stand out with prominence and decision. The rest is a symphony in white.

He might have made his problem easier by throwing a strong light upon the figure from one side. This would have made some parts of the dress shine out with the brightness of very high lights, and would have caused the figure to cast a shadow on the wall. This would have produced a harmony of contrasts; a bold contrast of color values, easier to paint. But Whistler was intent on something very subtle — a harmony of similarities. So he placed the figure in a dull light, that was evenly distributed over the rug, the figure, and the wall, with the result that the distinctions between the color values were very slight, very subtle. This means that it was difficult to make the different masses of white distinct from one another. The artist, you see, had to make it appear that the girl's white figure was nearer to us than the white wall; to make us feel that, while the wall is flat, the figure has roundness and bulk; and that, while the wall is an upright surface, the rug represents a horizontal one. Yes it was indeed a very difficult problem, because the only possible way of solving it was to render the very slight differences in the quantity of light, reflected from each and every part of the white surfaces, according to the angle at which the light reached any part, and the distance each part was from the eye of the artist. And no doubt the keen mind of Whistler was interested in the subtlety of the problem. But this was not all. His feeling as an artist was equally subtle. It delighted in the subtleties of color values.

However, he also enjoyed effects of brighter color. I have asked you to imagine this picture of Whistler's because it illustrates the first meaning of "values" — namely the different quantities of light that may be contained in one and the same color. I wish to illustrate now the other meaning of "values" — which has to do with the quantity of light contained in one color as compared with that in another color; for example, with the percentage of light contained in red as compared with that contained in blue, or green, or white, or any other color. For this purpose I have chosen the second in Whistler's series of symphonies in white: *The Little White Girl.* You can look at the reproduction and see for yourself that part of the color scheme,



The Little White Girl, J. M. Whistler

or color harmony, certainly the most important part, consists of the figure of the girl in white. You will notice how it illustrates what we have been saying about the other white girl. It is evenly lighted, there are no contrasts of extreme light and dark; the dress is a woven tissue of subtly different values of white. But in this case Whistler has treated the white dress as the theme or chief motive, as a musician would say, and has woven around it a composition of variations. It is the variations that I wish you now particularly to notice. They may be put under two heads. First the reflection of the girl's head in the mirror; second, the various spots of color that surround her.

Suppose we begin with the latter. On the mantel-shelf, close to the flesh-color of the girl's hand and the white of her sleeve is a Japanese jar, decorated in white and blue, and beside it a Japanese box covered with that smooth shiny surface called lacquer, and of a scarlet color, like a geranium. Down below appear the sprays of camelias with dark green glossy leaves and white and rosy blossoms. The fan repeats these colors, but with a difference. There is red in it, but of a different value to the red of the box and flowers; blue, but of another value than that on the vase; green, which differs in value from the leaves. Secondly, in the mirror is a repetition of the girl's head and of certain colors in the room. But the reflected head, as you can see in the reproduction, is in a lower key than the real one. The colors are lower in value; there is not so much light in them; for the mirror has absorbed some of it. You may test a mirror's appetite for light by holding your handkerchief close to it. You will see that the white of the reflection is much greyer than the handkerchief, or according to the quality of the glass, it may seem slightly blue. At any rate its value will be lower than that of the handkerchief; just as in this picture, the reflected colors of the flesh and hair are lower in value than the actual head.

Now, looking at the picture, we note that the figure occupies about one half of the composition. It illustrates, as did *The Sower*, the use of a main diagonal line, though the feeling suggested by it is different. In *The Sower*, you will remember, the diagonal helped to give vigor and alertness to the figure; while here, on the contrary, its suggestion is one of very gracious quiet. For the slope of this diagonal is not so steep as in the other picture; nor do the directions of the

arms and head present such abrupt contrasts. The left arm it is true, is nearly at right angles — itself a strong contrast; but it is so quietly laid along the mantel-shelf, which supports its weight, that there is no suggestion of effort. Meanwhile, the other arm, hanging so easily, is almost parallel to the main diagonal. The line also of the neck gently carries on the lines of the shoulders, and, as the head is slightly tilted back, its downward pressure is supported by the shoulder that rests on the shelf. The whole suggestion of the figure, in fact, is one of rest. There is no conscious bodily effort to interfere with the reverie in which the girl's mind is wrapt. She may be buried in her thoughts or she may be absorbed in the beauty of the box and vase, at which she seems to be looking. "Seems," I say, for it is difficult to be sure that she is conscious of them. Her gaze seems fixed to a far vision, as if she had begun by looking at these objects, and then, as her thoughts passed beyond them, had let the gaze of her eyes follow. She seems buried in some girlish reverie, wrapt "in maiden meditation, fancy free." To me it is a very lovely figure not because of the features of the face — opinions may differ about the face being beautiful in the ordinary sense of having beautiful features. Its beauty to me lies in its expression; in its expression of some lovely mood of a girl's spirit. And I find the figure beautiful, because all through it is the movement of the same expression. This must have been in Whistler's mind when he painted her. But he was conscious, perhaps, of another side of her nature; that she had moods of brightness as well. At any rate he chose to contrast with the pensive calm of the girl herself the bright animated spots of color that surround her.

These spots of color, if you examine the picture carefully, really play the part of the shadows in the chiaroscuro of old pictures. Chiaroscuro, you remember, is the pattern of light and dark. Here the red box and the blue of the vase and the green and rose, of the camelias, yes, and even the face in the mirror, the marble shelf and fireplace — all represent the dark spots. But not dark in the old way of being shadows. They are dark as compared with the white of the dress because their colors reflect less light than the white; their values are lower. Thus they serve the purposes of a dark contrast and yet they themselves are very light. This, in a nutshell, is what the new study of values, that was learnt from Velasquez and from Vermeer,

and the other Dutchmen, really means. It has enabled the artist to be even more true to life in the representation of objects, and at the same time to make his color-harmonies purer, clearer and more transparent; in one word, luminous; permeated, that is to say, with a suggestion of light, that in nature permeates the atmosphere and brings all objects into an appearance of harmonious unity.

How this particular picture is helped by a contrast, not of the old fashioned dark and light, as in the *Descent from the Cross* but of values of color, you can see for yourself, even from the reproduction. Still more would you realize it could you see the freshness and purity and gladsomeness of the original. Contrasts are needful in the composition of a work of art — they are one of the sources of its beauty. But imagine if you can, having shadows and darkness brought into contrast with this white robed figure! How they would contradict the expression of its exquisite purity and loveliness! As it is, the contrast of lower values does not in the least jar upon the expression; on the contrary, it gives it a greater meaning, since it suggests the atmosphere of happiness and brightness that has helped to color the beauty of the girl's spirit.

CHAPTER 15
Color (Continued)

Texture, Atmosphere, Tone

In our previous talk about color we have laid great stress on the relation of one color to another. We have not thought of red, for example, as beautiful by itself, but as one of a family of colors, whose beauty consists in their relation to one another. And this related beauty we have spoken of as color harmony.

"Behold how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity." So said the Psalmist, and his words might be applied to the unity of colors. He did not mean that everybody shall be of a like mind; there will always be differences of character among relations and the best of friends; but they will agree to differ; and their very differences make their unity or harmony the more real and good. Such is the harmony among colors; a union of differences or contrasts, as well as of similarities; of variety of values of color related into a harmonious unity.

On the other hand, though the beauty of colors is chiefly to be found in their relations to one another, there are separate possibilities of beauty to each color. And if each displays its own share of these the general beauty of the harmony will be increased. Some of the possibilities are texture, quality, and tone.

Texture first. It is derived from the Latin word, *textum* — something woven. Texture, in its original meaning, represents what has been produced by weaving. A lady, when she is shopping, presses the linen or silk, or cotton goods between her fingers in order to judge of their texture; whether it is closely or loosely woven, whether it is hard or smooth to the touch. Secondly, the word is used of a thing made by any other means than weaving. We speak, for example, of the texture of paper; and judge of its texture by the feel of it. Thirdly, it has come to be used of any material, whether made by man or nature.

Thus we say that oak has a very close texture; glass is of firm but brittle texture; butter is greasy in texture, and so on. Finally, the word is used in a very general way to describe the character of any substance, especially the kind of surface that it has. So we say of the flesh of a healthy baby, that its texture is firm and silky; and we speak of the glossy texture of a polished table; the downy texture of a young chicken's breast, or the velvety texture of a peach. In one word, texture is the quality of a thing that we discover by touching it.

Texture appeals to our sense of touch. It excites in us a variety of feelings, pleasant or unpleasant. I need not tell you how disagreeable the texture of sharp rocks may be to your bare feet, when you are bathing; what a relief it is to them to feel the texture of sand. Some of you, I am sure, are conscious of the pleasure you derive from handling things. You have discovered for yourselves what a lot of feeling you have in the tips of your fingers. You would enjoy handling the red box in Whistler's picture: and your touch would be very careful and delicate. Not alone because the box is valuable, but because it is only with a delicate touch that you can appreciate the exquisite smoothness of the lacquer. The latter is a varnish composed of the gum of a certain tree. The Japanese workman lays it over the box very thinly, and, when it is thoroughly dried, rubs the surface until it is perfectly smooth. Then he applies another coating of lacquer and again rubs, continuing the process several times, until at last, the surface shows not a single flaw or inequality, and is smooth and silky beyond the description of any words. It is only by the look of it, and still more, by the feel of it, that you can appreciate the exquisite finish of the surface; and your delight in it is mingled with almost a reverence for the patience and love of the craftsman, who could work so long and so faithfully to make this little work of art perfect in its beauty and beautiful in its perfection. Compared with this lacquer box, the texture of an ordinary polished table or piano seems coarse and commonplace.

I might go on to speak of the different kinds of sensation that you would enjoy if you touched the waxy petals of the camelia. But it is not necessary. For if you have a joy in the sense of touch I need not try to tell you about it. I will only ask you to wait a few minutes, until we see how the enjoyment derived from texture enters into the appreciation of a picture.

Meanwhile, if any of you have not as yet been conscious of getting this sort of pleasure through your fingers, let me say that this does not prove that you have no feeling for textures. I think that you have had it unconsciously; for I suspect that the pleasure that you take in flowers is not only because of their shape and color. As you have examined the beauty of roses, the texture of their petals has not escaped you. In one case, how silky; in another, how softly crumpled; in another, how delicately waxen! You may never have put these ideas into words, or even been conscious of them; but do you not see, now I mention these textures, that they have had a good deal to do with your pleasure in the roses? It may be, after all, the difference in the texture that makes you prefer one rose to another.

However, whether this be so or not, the fact remains that a great number of people derive pleasure from the textures of objects. So let us now see how the artist, who, as I have said before, has instincts and feelings like our own, takes advantage of this feeling for texture to add to the beauty of his picture.

We shall often see a picture in which the textures are not represented. Even modern pictures sometimes fail in this respect; and it is a very common fault with early American pictures, painted by artists who had not the advantage of training that the modern student enjoys. I will quote the case of John Singleton Copley, a very famous painter of the Colonial Period, who lived in Boston and made portraits of the well-to-do men and women of the time, just preceding the Revolution. Before the latter broke out, he went to England, where he spent the rest of his life and was highly thought of. His portraits are handsome as pictures for they represent men and women, mostly of elegant manners in handsome clothes. They also give the impression of being good likenesses. Yet his pictures lack animation. The figures and the costumes are stiff and hard. This is partly due to there being no suggestion of atmosphere surrounding them. The picture is not filled with air and light, as we found Vermeer's was. But there is another reason. Copley was unskilful in the presentation of textures.

The flesh and hair, the materials of the costumes, the furniture and ornaments, present no differences of texture. All seem to have a uniformly hard surface, as if they were made of wood or tin. The result

is that the whole picture seems hard and stiff — lacking in animation. If you ask me why this lack of animation is caused by the artist's neglect of textures, I think the answer is that Copley has not given to everything in his picture its own separate, particular character. For when you come to think of it — and the dictionary meaning of the word textures, bears me out — the character of everything depends so much upon its texture; whether it is hard or soft, smooth or rough, glossy or dull, and so on. Now, if there were a number of girls and boys in the room, all sitting round with the same dull expression on their faces, we should say that the whole group lacked animation. What makes a party animated and lively, is the fact that it is composed of a number of persons, each having a separate character to which he or she gives free play. The more easily and naturally each exhibits his or her character, the more animated and lively will be the fun of the party.

Now, do you not see how this applies to a picture? The artist invites a number of different textures to his party or composition. Surely the party will be lacking in animation if he does not bring out the special character of each. The lady's face and hands will not contribute their full share to the animation of the whole composition, unless the character of their texture is expressed. It will not be enough to represent only the coloring of the flesh, for its beauty depends also upon its firmness and softness. Her satin dress will lose half its charm, if we are only made to see its shine and gloss. We know satin to be also soft and thin, ready to arrange itself in all sorts of delicate folds. This is a chief charm in the character of satin; and if this particular satin does not exhibit these qualities of texture, the dress will not do its proper share in helping the animation of the figure. Well! if you agree with me about the satin dress, I think that you will see that the same thing holds good of the table on which her arm is resting, and the glass vase with carnations in it that stands near her hand. Do you not think that the character of the hand will be better expressed, if the separate characters also of the polished wood, the hard shiny cut glass, and the soft velvety flowers are playing their part? They may not be so important as the woman and her dress, but in a composition as in a party, everybody must do their share, if the affair is to be a complete success.

The first great masters in the rendering of textures were the old Flemish artists of the Fifteenth Century — the brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck, for example, and Hans Memling. Their country — what we now call Belgium — had long been famous for its textiles. Silks, linens, cloths and velvets — its gold and silver and other metal work, its manufacture and decorating of glass. The Flemish were a nation of craftsmen, skilled in the production of the most beautiful articles of domestic use and church worship. And this love for objects of beautiful workmanship was shared by her painters. They represented them in their pictures. They painted not only the character of the men and women of the time, but the character of the life in which they lived, and did this by surrounding them with the furniture and objects that gave distinction to their lives. So the very rug on the floor, the glass in the windows, the mirror on the wall in its highly wrought frame, as well as the clothes worn by these quiet, serious men and women, have a choiceness of feeling. The room is not simply furnished, much less is it cluttered up with all kinds of tasteless Department Store "objets d'art." Every thing in it has its own distinction of beauty, suggesting the taste and refinement of its owners, and so by its own character contributing to our appreciation of the character of the men and women in the picture. Another great master of texture was the German artist of the Sixteenth Century, Hans Holbein the younger. He too loved things of delicate and exquisite craftsmanship and often made designs of such things for the workmen of his native city, Augsburg. So he was fond of introducing such articles into his pictures. It was a joy to him to paint them, each one with its own individual character of texture. Still, notwithstanding his love of them, he only puts them into his pictures when their character will help the character of his main subject. So, when he paints the portrait of a rich merchant of taste, like Georg Gyze in his office, he surrounds him with many objects related to his work — inkpot, seal, scissors, ledger, and can for holding string, letters, and a scale for weighing money. There is a profusion of beautifully fashioned objects, but they all by their separate characters help us to understand more fully the character of the merchant himself. On the other hand, since characterization was Holbein's main purpose, he treats the portrait of the great scholar Erasmus, differently. Here he

introduces only a small writing desk, a sheet of paper on it, and a pen in the scholar's hand. These remind us that Erasmus was a writer; while the handsome rings on his fingers and a piece of finely woven material on the wall, tell us of another side of his character — that beside his love of learning, he had a taste for the beautiful things of life.

Looking back then over what we have been saying, we find that when the artist suggests to us the different kinds of sensation we may receive from touching things, he greatly increases the expressiveness of his pictures. By rendering or representing the textures, as well as the form and color of objects, he accomplishes at least four results. Firstly, he makes the objects more life-like; we feel as if we might really handle them and receive the sensation that such objects, if they were real, would give us. Secondly, he gives us a more keen enjoyment of their beauty; consciously or unconsciously we receive a sensation of the pleasure of handling them. Thirdly, the increased life-likeness and beauty increases the general animation of the whole picture. Fourthly, this rendering of the separate character of each object contributes to our understanding and appreciation of the character of the whole subject. To sum up, the rendering of textures suggests reality, beauty, animation, and character.

Atmosphere we have already alluded to in previous chapters. We saw how Vermeer filled the scene of his picture with lighted air; and, in discussing color, we talked of it first as light, and then went on to study how the light which is in the air affects the light which is reflected from all objects that are visible. We found that colors differ from one another in the quantity of light they contain: in what artists call their values; the value of red, for example, being different from the value of blue or green. Also we found that each single color may have variations of value, according to the quantity and direction of the light which falls upon it.

All this, you may say, has more to do with light than atmosphere. But the two are really united. What we call atmosphere, as you know, is the volume of gases which surrounds the earth. The particles from these gases are lit up by the light. We cannot see the particles, only the reflections of light thrown off by them. But though we cannot see the particles themselves, they can interfere with our seeing of other

things. It is the layers or veils of atmosphere that lie between us and a distant hill, that prevent our seeing the bright green grass on the latter and the dark green fir trees. Seen through the atmosphere, the colors of the hill appear subdued, the very form and bulk of the ground flattened and, perhaps, indistinct.

This effect of atmosphere is one of the things that we are now going to discuss. The other is that atmosphere penetrates everywhere. Suppose we begin with the second point. The atmosphere is in one respect like water; it is a fluid. It flows in and out and around about and fills the whole space that is not occupied by some other body. But have you thought what this means to an artist? Or at least to some artists; for we said that Copley's pictures contained little or no suggestion of atmosphere. And the same may be said of a great many pictures by modern artists. They represent the form and color of things, but do not suggest that they are surrounded, or, as is often said, enveloped in atmosphere.

Why is this? Well! in the first place, as you remember, there are many artists who do not profess to represent nature. When they use nature as a model, it is for the purpose only of getting the forms of nature, and these they improve upon, as they will tell you, so as to make the forms in their picture "ideally perfect." These "Academic" or "classic" painters as I have already said, think of art as separate from nature. On the other hand, even among those who think of art as a means of interpreting nature, there are many artists who never put atmosphere into their pictures. Or, if they do, it is not nature's atmosphere.

Then what sort of atmosphere is it? I call it a studio atmosphere, because it is manufactured in the studio. The artist, feeling the need of softening the hard outlines of his figures and of subduing any harshness of color, spreads over the picture thin layers of transparent, slightly colored varnish. Through these glazes, as they are called, the forms and colors are seen, somewhat as if you were looking at them through a piece of colored glass, and the effect is to merge or bathe them in a glow of atmosphere.

This was a usual practice with the great colorists of the Italian Renaissance. Correggio's pictures, for example, are prized for their golden glow. It is one of the reasons of their beauty. But then, his idea

was not to interpret nature. His subjects were drawn from the Bible, or the Christian religion, or Greek Mythology, and he treated them as his imagination suggested. He saw them through the glow of his own imagination, and surrounded them with a glow that seems to place them far away from actual things in a beautiful world of their own. Similarly, modern colorists, when they create pictures out of their own imagination, will suffuse them with an artificial atmosphere that helps to express the spirit of the scene. In fact, these atmospheric effects, produced by glazing, are beautiful and proper in their place. But their place is not in pictures that profess to be studies of nature. In these it is as wrong to suggest an unnatural atmosphere, as it is to leave out all suggestion of atmosphere whatsoever, which is, perhaps, the more usual fault.

Since the true rendering of atmosphere is a part of the true representation of light and color, you will not be surprised to learn that it appeared in the pictures of Velasquez and of the Dutchmen of the Seventeenth Century. We have already spoken of it in the case of Vermeer. It was from these artists that modern colorists, beginning about 1860, have learned to study the effects of atmosphere and light. They have carried the study even further than the older men. Indeed, the rendering of light and atmosphere has been the most distinct triumph of modern painting. There are tv7o reasons for this.

One is, that with the advance of scientific studies and mechanical inventions, people have become more than ever interested in the every day facts of life; and the writers, painters, and sculptors, following with the stream, have studied more and more how to represent life and its surroundings, not as we may dream they should be, but as they are known to our actual experience. They have become ardent "realists" or "naturalists." "Realists," because they are occupied with what we are in the habit of calling the realities of life.[11] "Naturalists," because they love nature and try to represent her actual appearances, as they are enveloped in and affected by light and atmosphere.

The second cause of the modern advance in rendering these

[11] Later on I shall have something to say about these so called realists. I shall say to them, as Hamlet said to Horatio, "There are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

qualities is again due to scientific discoveries. Scientific men have made a close study of light and color and the painters have profited by the results. Painting, in a measure, has joined hands with science.

However, now that we have seen why some artists do not put atmosphere into their pictures, and that among those who do some manufacture an atmosphere of their own, while others try to render nature's atmosphere, let us study for ourselves the effect of atmosphere. In nature. It will help us, if I begin by telling what we expect to find. First then, that the outlines of objects are softened; secondly, that the bulk of things seems flattened; and thirdly, that as objects recede or stand further off from our eyes, their forms becomes more and more indistinct and their colors change.

As to the first. Suppose you are standing on a street or country road, and a wagon passes you. While it is close in front of you, the body of the wagon and the wheels and the man driving, all are clearly outlined; you can distinguish distinctly the parts of the wagon and the character of the man's figure, whether it is fat or thin, strong or weak-looking, and so on. But, as the wagon passes along the road, its appearance changes. At first, it is the smaller details that disappear; they have become merged in the general mass; then the outlines of this mass grow less and less distinct; you could not be sure now, unless you had seen the wagon close, exactly what its build is; nor does one part seem nearer to you than another, its bulk has become flattened, and gradually the whole affair looks to be only a patch of color against the color of the road.

Do you remember, it was as patches we saw the cows which we met early in our talk? The reason then given for their appearance was that our eyes were not strong enough to distinguish their details at such a distance. And this reason also holds good in the case of the wagon. But it is not only the distance that reduces our power of seeing, but also the layers, or veils of atmosphere that hang between us and the object. We are sure of this on a foggy day, when the mist lies low over the country or city, and trees and tall buildings loom up like blurs, and everything beyond the distance of a few hundred paces is blotted from sight. But the fog or mist is only the atmosphere more moist than usual and with its moisture condensed by cooling.

When you breathe on a mirror, the damp of your breath is



The Mystic Marriage of St. Catharine, Correggio

condensed by the coolness of the glass. A film of mist forms over the mirror. Of an evening you may see the mist lying over the river or meadows; for the sun is gone down and the earth and air are cooling. But the upper air cools more quickly than the lower part, since the latter is still warmed by the heat stored in the earth. So, as the cooler air from above drops down, it acts like a mirror to the breath of the earth or the air that lies close over it; and this air is condensed into mist. All through the night both air and earth are cooling, but the earth more slowly, so that there is still a meeting of cooler and warmer air and consequent condensations, and the mist is hovering over the meadows when the next morning's sun rises. As the sun mounts up, it begins to spread its warmth and the upper air is the first to feel it.

Growing warm, it rises, drawing up after it the cooler air below. And as the cooler air is sucked up, the warmer air closes in behind it; until, as this circulation of cool and warm continues, the warmth at last reaches down to the mists above the earth. And then commences that beautiful sight that you may see on some summer mornings. The mists, that a while ago lay like a blanket over the sleeping earth, begin to stir, as if they themselves were awakening from sleep. They tremble a little, then slowly stretch themselves, and begin to rise to meet the warmth of day. And as they rise, little wisps of mist become detached from the main body and float up and disappear, until gradually the whole rising mass is rent asunder by the currents of warm air into shreds and wreaths, which curl and float and soar and at last lose themselves in the warmth that now wraps the earth.

Later in the day, if the weather is very hot the air, close above the ground, becomes so heated that it rises very quickly, and we see a shimmer of light upon its shifting patches. I mention this, because I wish you to think of atmosphere, not only as veils of gauze hung between us and objects we are looking at, but also as a moving, palpitating, vibrating fluid. We will talk a little more about this presently. Meanwhile, let us note some of the effects of atmosphere upon form and color.

We have mentioned that it softens the outlines of objects. This is only another way of saying that the objects appear less distinct; that even a chimney, though it cuts against the sky in strong contrast, has not really hard sharp outlines. At first sight you will think, perhaps, that it has; just as the cornices of the roofs may seem to you to have hard lines, and the windows and doorways to be sharply outlined. But they do not appear so to an artist's eye, and will not to yours in time, if you are observant. Suppose an artist with pen and ink should draw one of these houses, using a straight edge to make the outline hard and sharp. This is how an architect draws the design of a house, because his object is to make an exact drawing for the builder to work by. But, if you have seen one of these architectural drawings, you will recognise, I think, that it does not look natural; that somehow or other it is too precise and tight and hard to suggest the appearance of an actual house. If this were his object, the architect himself would draw the house differently. He would make what is called a free-hand

drawing. He would no longer represent the edges of cornices and chimneys and so on, with continuous lines; he would "break them up"; lifting his pen for a moment and leaving a tiny space of white before he continues the line; making the line thicker or thinner as he went along, and occasionally pressing on his pen to produce a dot. In these ways he will break up all the edges and outlines that they may not be too hard, but may have the less distinct appearance that the lines of the actual house present to his eye. For the same reason when he draws any bits of carving, such as the capitals of the columns of the front door, he will not represent every detail exactly, as if he were making a working drawing for the carver. He will leave out some and break up others, so that, although he plainly indicates the style and character of the ornament, it will not seem hard and sharp, but softened, and a trifle indistinct, as the capital appears to his eye. He will, in fact, make allowances for the softening effects of atmosphere.

Up to this point we have imagined the penmanship to be concerned only with the lines. Now let us see how a great pen-artist, like Joseph Pennell, or Edwin A. Abbey, would carry his drawing further. He would see the house, not as a skeleton of lines, but as a mass, part of which is silhouetted against the sky, while the rest is seen in relation to the other buildings or objects that stand near it. Each according to his own individual technique, that is to say, his own particular way of using the pen, will make his building a mass distinct from the masses of the other buildings, of the ground, and of the sky. And on the masses of buildings he will make the windows appear as they do in the actual building — namely, as patches, darker in color than the walls. All this he will do, because to his eye the different objects, under the influence of the atmosphere, appear as masses of various colors in relation to one another. More than this, when you have grown to appreciate fully the work of Pennell and Abbey, you will find that, though it is done in black and white, it seems to suggest color.

Elsewhere I have spoken of the fact that many artists, especially modern ones, see nature as an arrangement of colored spaces or masses in relation to one another. This implies that they are very little conscious of the edges or outlines of the masses. If they think of them at all, it is to try and prevent your noticing them in their pictures.

They paint, for example, the head, and shoulders, and cheek of a man, a bust portrait — with a dark background. If you examine the picture closely, you will not find a sharp line, separating the head from the background. In fact the color of the hair and cheek seems to extend a little way into the dark of the background. The artist has dragged his brush round the head, so that it is impossible to say just where the background begins. The reason for this you understand, as soon as you step back and look at the picture from a short distance off. The head appears very solid; we can believe there is really a hard skull beneath the full flesh of the cheeks and the tight skin of the forehead. Yet the head does not seem to be stuck against the background, like a postage stamp on an envelope. Indeed, if the picture is well painted, the dark part is not really a background. That is to say, it is not merely something behind the head; it seems to have depth and to go back, but it also comes forward and surrounds the head. The latter does not stick out of the picture, it keeps its place back within the frame, enveloped in atmosphere that, though it is very dark, is penetrable. You feel, that is to say, that your hand could be pushed through it without coming up against some wall, as it were, that would stop it.

Now I particularly wished you to notice that the head suggested to us that hardness of the skull and the varying firmness and tightness of the flesh. For it proves that the softening of the outline will not interfere with the feeling of hardness and strength, or firmness in the mass. The effect, indeed, is to increase it, since out attention is concentrated on the head and not distracted to the outline. On the other hand, do not suppose that the softening of outlines is always intended to increase the suggestion of solidity. It may be part of an entirely opposite intention; namely, to lose sight of the idea of solidity of mass. For example, the French landscape artist, Corot, often represented the masses of the trees as soft, dark blurs against the soft light of the sky. For he loved especially the early dawn and late evening, when the light is very faint and in the hush the trees loom up like quiet spirits. He wished you to feel their presence, but not to be conscious of their solidity and bulk. He, you see, used the softened outline for a different purpose; which shows that in art, as in other matters, a single principle may be applied variously in different cases.

These tree-presences of Corot are painted very flatly. The roundness of their bulk disappears into a flat mass. It was one of the ways in which he avoided the suggestion of solidity. But here again comes in the fact that a principle may have other applications; for flatness does not necessarily make the object appear unsubstantial. A house does not look so, yet its front may be flat. And Corot, as other artists, and as you may, if you use your eyes, had discovered that in the open air all objects appear flatter than they do indoors. The reason is that in the case of a room lighted by windows, the light is always stronger near the windows than it is in parts of the room further removed. The light is unequally distributed, so that there are more shadows to throw up the bulk of objects. But out of doors the light is more diffused; more equally distributed. Moreover, we view things from a greater distance, so that more atmosphere intervenes. The effect of both these facts is to make the masses of objects seem flatter. The lawn from a little distance may look very smooth; but, when you walk over it, you find the grass needs to be cut and the bumps to be rolled before you can play croquet. That maple, too, is a sturdy, solid fellow, but as you see its mass of pale green against the darker mass of hemlock, both seem flatter than they do when you are climbing among their branches.

In speaking of the softening of outline and flattening of bulk due to atmosphere we have frequently alluded to the effect of distance on the appearance of objects. The further off the latter are, the more atmosphere will intervene, the less distinct will they appear. In the case of distant hills, the ups and downs of the ground, the bulk of the trees, even the stability and massiveness of "the everlasting hills," may be softened and flattened into what seems to be only a faint mass of color.

Perhaps we have walked over these hills and know them to be carpeted with grass; the greens also of the maples, oaks, cypress, each with its separate hue, attracted our attention. But to-day, from a distance, all these greens are lost in a vaporous hue of blue. It is this effect of atmosphere on color that we will now talk about. It is easy to notice in the case of the hills because of the great quantity of atmosphere that intervenes between us and them. But, if there were a row of maples extending from the hills to us, so placed that we could

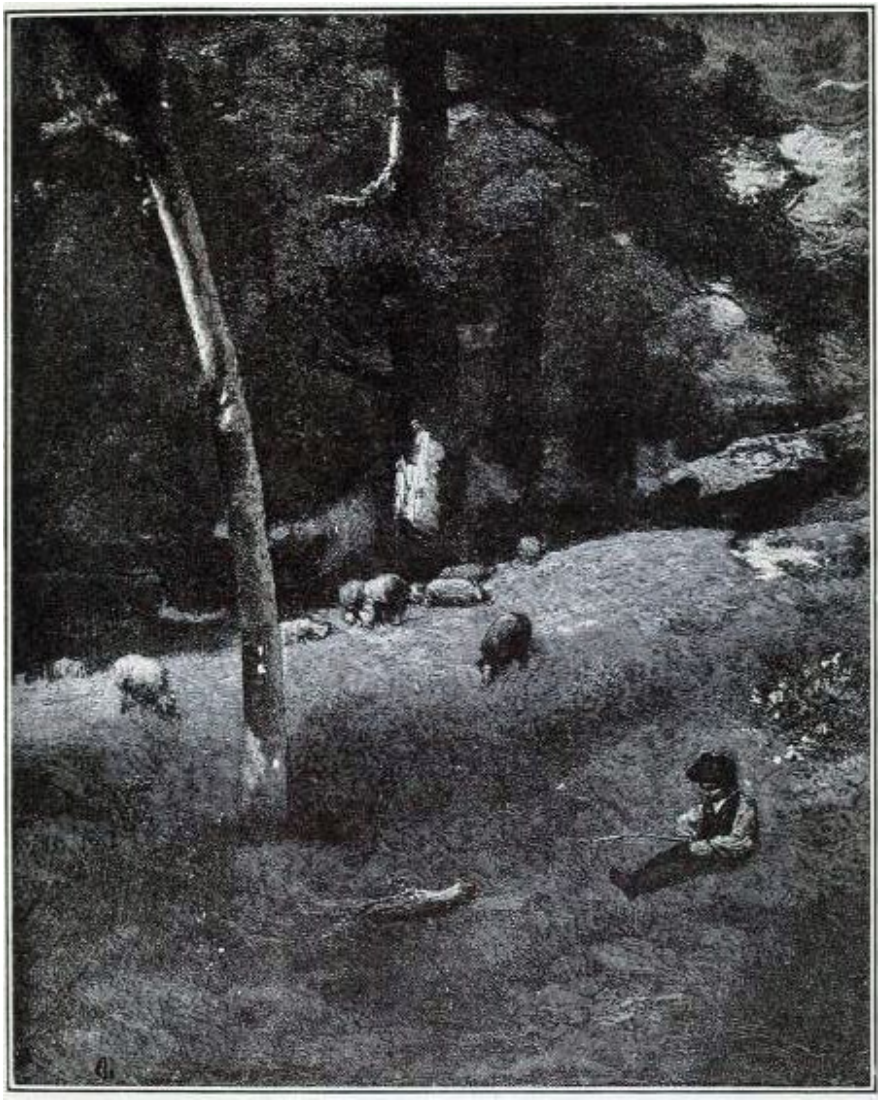
look along their entire length, we should find the appearance of their color gradually changing, as they recede from our eyes. In a word, to the sensitive eye of the artist the colors of even nearby objects are affected by atmosphere.

Now, those hills appear to be blue; another day, they will incline more to grey; yet another day to violet or purple, or pinkish. In winter time, around 'New York, they would very likely take on a dry, whitish color. In fact, the color will vary according to the condition of the atmosphere and the quality of the light; depending upon how moist or dry, how warm or chill, the atmosphere may be, and whether the light is yellow or golden, grey or white, full or feeble, and so on. It is these constant variations of lighted atmosphere that give continually fresh interest to the beauty of nature. Nature never wearies us by being always the same. It is like a human face, whose expression is continually changing.

Sometimes we see a beautiful human face, with almost perfect features. But behind that beautiful mask may be a very dull, uninteresting mind. If so, the expression of the face will be passive, the opposite, that is to say, to active. It will not leap from grave to gay; kindle, sparkle, grow tender, or angry and joyful by turns. It will be — "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly *null*" — no expression. And we may even tire of its beauty; while a face, less perfect in features, may win us more and more and hold our interest by the charm of its continually varying expression. The more we think of it, the more do we realise that beauty depends upon expression. It is the same with nature as with the human face. Its beauty is affected by expression and this is produced by the varieties in the lighted atmosphere.

A moment's thought will satisfy you of this. Nature's features vary with the seasons, but change little from day to day. Every morning, during the summer vacation, the same objects greet your eye, but how differently you feel towards them, according to what we call the weather, which after all is the condition of the atmosphere. One day the familiar features of the landscape will take on an expression of gladness, some other day of dullness; and the more we study the features, the more variable will their expression appear from hour to hour, day to day, and season to season.

I spoke just now of the movement of the atmosphere. It is a fluid,



Light and Shade, George Inness

that one day may be as still as a forest pool, another day may be stirred like the ocean. We cannot see its particles, but we do see the light reflected from them; and, I suppose, it is the differences in the appearances of the lighted reflections that make us conscious of the stillness or movement of the atmosphere on days when there is no wind. We need not be very sensitive to nature to notice these differences of the atmosphere at different seasons of the year; how, on

certain winter days, the air seems absolutely motionless; while on other days it seems alert and sprightly; how in early spring it seems astir with gentle life, while in summer or autumn it may be alive with animation or heavy with drowsy languor.

The motionless air of winter has been rendered with marvellous truth by John H. Twachtman; the stir of spring by Dwight W. Tryon; the active air of summer by Childe Hassam, and its languorous drowsiness by George Inness. All these are American artists, whom I mention only as examples. For much of the beauty of modern art, both American and foreign, is due to the sensitive rendering of the variations in the atmosphere. For, the best artists now-a-days are not satisfied to paint the features of nature only; they aim to depict the varying expressions on her face. And the chief cause, as I have said, of these variations is the constant change in the conditions of the lighted atmosphere.

CHAPTER 16
Color (Continued)

Tone

We shall frequently hear the words tone, tonal, tonality, applied to pictures. People say, for example, this picture is rich in tone; that has fine tonal qualities; another has a delicate tonality. It is rather difficult to explain what these words mean, for they do not seem to be used in the same way by everybody. However, let us try.

It is clearly a word derived from music, where its meaning is more definite. We speak of a piano's tone, by which we mean that, though it sounds the same notes as another piano, the quality of the sounds differs. We shall be using the word quality often in the present chapter, so let us be sure we understand its meaning. It is from the Latin word *qualis*, which means of what kind. Of what kind is this piece of dress goods; what is its quality, compared with another piece, at first sight similar? Is it all wool, for example, while the other is cotton mixture? Is it softer, while the other is harder and drier? Will the one stand washing, while the other will shrink? Similarly, when the same note is struck on two pianos the tone of one may be rich, mellow, resonant, while that of the other is thin, raw, and metallic.

Why is the tone superior? You know, I suppose, that when a piano string is struck it vibrates. That is to say, it ceases to be a straight line, and becomes agitated into a series of waves. In order to increase the volume of the sound a thin layer of wood, called the sound board, is placed beneath the strings. As the string vibrates, this board vibrates in sympathy, and so the volume of sound is increased and enriched. Now the least thing may disturb the perfection of this sympathetic vibration. Accordingly, the superiority of the one piano is due to the fact that all its parts are of finer make and material, and are more perfectly adjusted to one another. They are in so perfect a relation, that there is no jar in any part, and thus the body of the instrument

is a united whole.

The tone of the piano, then, is due to the perfect relation existing between the parts of the piano. Applying this idea to a picture: it would seem that tone is the result of all the colors being so perfectly related to one another, that the vibration or rhythm of the whole color-harmony is increased.

Now this is certainly, in a general way, the meaning of the word tone. So, although the word itself is new to you, the idea contained in it is not. We have talked a good deal about color-relations, rhythm, and harmony. You remember our talk on Vermeer's picture. Well, his is a tonal picture, because of the perfect relation of all the colors to one another. It is beautiful in tone; its tonality is exquisite. And do you remember one particular feature of its exquisiteness? I pointed out to you that it is full of lighted atmosphere, and that the atmosphere seems to vibrate; that its rhythm passes through and through the picture, uniting all the masses of color into a harmonious whole. We noted the difference between this kind of rhythm and that in Raphael's *Jurisprudence,* where the rhythm is the result of line. You could not describe that picture as tonal; for in it color plays a very unimportant part. Raphael was busied with the relations, not of color, but of line.

I have reminded you of the rhythm of atmosphere in Vermeer's picture, because some people describe tone, as the result of fusing all the forms and colors into a whole by enveloping them in atmosphere. But I think, if you have followed our talks carefully, you will see that this use of the word tone is pretty much the same as the one we have arrived at. For you cannot see the effects of atmosphere except in relation to the coloring of nature. And I like our explanation better than this one, because it is broader, and therefore includes more. It includes, for example, all Japanese prints. Many of them exhibit no suggestion of atmosphere; yet they are always tonal in the sense that their colors are in perfect relation.

Now, let me tell you of another definition of tone, which again is included in our own. Some people will tell you that a picture is tonal, because there is some one prevailing hue of color in it. By "prevailing" we mean that some one color plays the most important part. In Vermeer's picture, you may remember, it was blue. The girl's skirt

made a strong spot of blue. We are aware of other colors in the picture, but they play subsidiary parts. What we are most conscious of is a sense of blue throughout the picture — a prevailing tone of blue. So in Whistler's *White Girl — Symphony in White, Number One,* there is a prevailing tone of white.

But this is only another way of saying that in each picture the colors are in a perfect relation to one another. Whether there are more or fewer colors, and whether we receive an impression of many colors or one in particular, does not really affect the question. When all is said and done, tone is the result of color relations, so arranged that they produce a rhythmic harmony.

An artist, when he paints a tonal picture, has in mind the relative dark and light of colors, and their relative coolness and warmth. Let me explain. First the relative coolness or warmth of colors. The artist regards blue as the coolest hue. As a matter of fact violet reflects even less light than blue; still, for his practical purposes, an artist says that the cool hue is blue, and he associates with it violet and green. On the other hand, yellow, he treats as warm, and associates with it red and orange.

And, if you consider for a moment, the distinction of warm and cool hues, which is practised by artists and founded on the nature of light, appeals to our own experience. You will have no hesitation in feeling that a bunch of violets, surrounded by green leaves, gives you a feeling of coolness, as compared with another bunch composed of red and yellow poppies.

Accordingly, if an artist has made up his mind that his tonal harmony shall be a cool one, he either composes it entirely of cool hues, or sees to it that some one or all of them shall "prevail." The warmer hues may be introduced for the sake of contrast, but very sparingly. And, of course, he will reverse his use of the hues, if he wishes the tone to be a warm one. This you could have guessed for yourselves; but I point it out because most people, I believe, prefer a warm picture. If it represents the sun setting in a mass of crimson over which the sky is orange, passing to yellow; and the effect of this warm light is shown on the surrounding trees and meadow, so that everything seems to be kindled into a dreamy warmth, we easily find the picture very beautiful. It is so attractive in its richness and mellow

warmth, that the quiet coolness of that picture opposite may seem tame by comparison, and we pass it by. On the other hand, if, recognising the difference of the intention, we study the latter picture carefully, we may very likely come to admire it even more than the warmer one, by reason of the very quietness of its appeal, or because of the purity and freshness of feeling that probably pervade it.

And now for the artist's other habit of considering the relative lightness and darkness of hues. It comes into play, whether his tonal arrangement be a cool one or a warm one. For by this means he introduces contrasts of color; and as we have pointed out, it is by contrasts as well as by similarities, that a harmony is produced.

There are two ways of considering the difference between light and dark. One is to treat it as an arrangement of *chiaroscuro,* the other as an arrangement of *values*. This is a distinction that I have already explained; but I will refresh your memory of it, in its special application to tone.

Chiaroscuro, as you remember, means light and dark. So it could be used of the light and dark of values: but, as a matter of fact, it is applied to the distribution of light and shadows, adopted by the artists of older times, and still used by many modern ones. In applying it, they represented the light, as coming from one direction, usually from behind their backs; and as striking the objects and figures in the picture at an angle, either on the right side or on the left. They also took care that the light should be concentrated or particularly bright at one spot. On the contrary, the artist who considers the light and dark of values, sees the light in the scene he is painting, and observes that it pervades all parts of it.

But, to return to the chiaroscuro; its effect is to produce strong contrasts of light and shade: high lights, nearly white in the parts most exposed to the light, and shadows almost black, in the parts most removed. To offset these strong contrasts the artist uses strong hues. The pure colors of red, yellow, green, blue, may be used in large masses. The result is a tonal harmony of great richness, striking magnificence, or surprising impressiveness.

Of the last kind is Hubens' *Descent from the Cross.* If you study a photograph of it, you will see that the light does come from within the scene. It flows from the Saviour's body; and the light, as it spreads,

illumines certain parts of the surrounding figures, especially the heads and hands; just the parts in fact, in which there is most expression of feeling. The sacred Body has the pallor of death, it is almost white, while black prevails elsewhere throughout the picture, the only other colors being the flesh tints of the faces and hands, and some dull green and red. It is an admirable example of the strong contrast of black and white, and, let me add, of the amazing effect that such contrast has on the imagination. For it is a picture that arouses one's emotions of awe and pity and reverence to an extraordinary degree; and the more you study it, the more you will realise that the source of its appeal is the chiaroscuro. The latter, though the light is within the scene, is purely arbitrary. Rubens, that is to say, did not try to imitate the effects of real light and darkness; he chose to be the arbiter or judge of how he would distribute them. And in the arrangement he had three purposes. First, he wished to secure the modeling of the figures; note the muscular force he has given to some of the men; the pathetic droop of the Virgin's figure; and the pitiable limpness of the Saviour's form. Secondly, he was able to make this composition of contrasts one of most impressive grandeur. Thirdly, as I have already hinted in speaking of the figures of the Saviour and the Virgin, he could by means of this superb invention of light and darkness, fill us with profound emotion.

So much for the older method of considering the relations between light and dark. The modern one, depending on the light and dark of values, derived from the example of Velasquez and of Vermeer and other Dutchmen of the Seventeenth Century, I have recently explained in connection with Whistler's *White Girl, Symphony in White, Number Two.* So I will only remind you that in this picture there is practically no contrast of shadow. The whole scene is bathed in a uniform light. But the contrast of dark is obtained by putting in certain objects, the red box, the blue vase, and so on, the values of which are lower than that of the white dress. The artist has thought of darkness, not as the result of shadow, but of certain colors being darker in themselves, because they reflect less light than others. If this is not quite clear to you, perhaps it will be, if you refer to the chapter in which this picture is discussed.

On the other hand, the modern artist, even if he works by values

rather than by chiaroscuro, must often wish to paint a scene that does involve shadows. We know that the scene may be filled with light and yet there will be certain places where the light is intercepted, so that shadows are formed. Our lawn in summer is aglow with warm light, but every tree and bush casts its shadow. Or the same spot in winter is covered with snow and the air is bright with cool light; yet here and there a trunk of a tree spreads a thin layer of shadow.

But the difference is in the way the modern artist regards shadow. He has studied nature for the purpose of representing the actual effects of nature; and, in so doing, has discovered that the secret of all effects is due to the action of light. So he has learned to look at everything, shadows included, in its relation to light. A shadow to him, then, is not something different from light; it is a lessening of the light. Some of the light has been intercepted by the foliage of the tree, so that less light reaches the ground. It may be that very little light filters through the leaves. But, whether more or little, the spot from which the light has been intercepted, still contains some light. Even what we usually call the shadows have light in them.

So, while chiaroscuro is a contrast of light and dark, the contrast of values may better be described as one of light and less light.

Observe how this works. Since the modern artist sees light in shadows, he also sees color in them. And their color varies according to the quality of the light and according to the local color of the spot affected. The local color of your lawn is green; therefore, even under the trees, where little light reaches the grass, the latter will still contain a greenish hue, though the value of it will be much lower than that of the sunlit lawn. On the other hand, the hue of the shadow will also be affected by the quality of the light, differing according as the light is dull or brilliant, and as it inclines to white or yellow. This is too intricate a subject to attempt to discuss here, but I mention it in order that, if you are wide awake and interested, you may amuse yourself by studying these effects in your walks abroad.

A simple way of starting the subject is to study the hue of the shadow cast by your hand on a sheet of white paper. I am working by the light of a Welsbach burner, and the shadow of my hand is a pale reddish purple. The other day, on a bright February morning, I laid my hand on a piece of white paper and the shadow was bluish. In

each case, owing to the amount of light reflected from the white paper, the shadow was very transparent, and beautiful in its delicacy and softness.

Well, this little example illustrates what artists have discovered about shadows lying on snow. They are very transparent, very delicate, and tend toward a hue of blue or plum color, according to the quantity of light.

Now to sum up our remarks on tone. When we speak of a picture having tonal qualities, we mean that the artist has so combined the related darks and lights and the related coolness and warmth of his colors that he has produced a harmony, threaded through and through with a suggestion of rhythm or vibration. And the vibration will be most felt, when the suggestion of atmosphere pervades the picture.

In the case of the *Descent from the Cross* we have already hinted at the power of tone to arouse emotion. I may add that tone always makes a strong appeal to feeling — to abstract feeling. The tonal harmony of an opal, whose pinks and greens are suffused with creamy atmosphere, arouses in us delight, quite apart from any suggestion to our mind. The delight is one of pure feeling. Can you not see that, if an artist uses the tonal harmony of the opal as a color scheme for a picture, the harmony would still delight us in an abstract way? It would be interwoven now with the subject of his picture, and we need not try, nor do we wish to separate them. But the sentiment of the figure or the scene will be all the more tender and lovely for the harmony with which it is suffused.

I have in mind, for example, the pictures by the American artist, Thomas W. Dewing. They show you one or two women standing or sitting, apparently lost in reverie, while placed beside them may be a table and a vase and on the wall a mirror. If you ask me what the picture is about, I will say: Nothing. There is no subject to them in the sense that you can describe: who the girl is, why she is there, and what she is doing. So, instead of talking to you about the figures, I should try to draw your attention to the subtlety and beauty of the tonal harmony. I should recommend you to look at it with a mind as free from outside thoughts, as when you were looking at the opal. Then by degrees, perhaps, as the beauty of the tone winds itself about

your imagination, you will begin to find some sentiment of beauty suggested by the girl herself.

What I wish you to understand is that an artist, who has the gift of composing tonal harmonies, employs them to express the abstract feelings or emotions that he has regarding his subject. A celebrated example is Whistler's *Portrait of the Artist's Mother,* that now hangs in the Luxembourg Gallery, in Paris. I expect you have seen photographs of it and remember that it represents an oldish lady, in a white lace cap and black gown, with her hands folded over a handkerchief on her lap. We see her figure seated in profile, in front of a grey wall. On it are two little black-framed pictures, and on one side hangs a dark green curtain.

When it was first exhibited the artist called it "An Arrangement in Black and Grey." It may be that he did not wish to drag his Mother into publicity or make a parade of his feelings as a son. But there was another reason, a much greater one. The abstract feelings that he had for his Mother — the love, reverence, and appreciation of her dignity and tenderness — took color in his artist's mind in an arrangement of black and grey. What a poet might have put into the rhythm and harmony of his verse, Whistler has expressed through the rhythm of a tonal harmony of color.

Another artist who was not a tonalist, might have contrived to put into the face and hands and into the lines of the figure as much dignity and gracious tenderness. But his picture would not move us so deeply as this one. For Whistler — how shall I de- scribe it? — has woven the dignity and tenderness into every part of the canvas. The mother sits alone with her own thoughts, but all about her is the music of color, choiring the love and reverence of her son. No wonder the picture takes its hold upon us; until we see in it not a mother, but the *type* of what the conception of Mother means to us.

Its tonal harmony is one that is distinguished by sobriety and reticence. It consists of quiet and sober colors; it does not talk to our hearts in brilliant glowing words. It moves us rather by its silence and reserve, its reticence. I mention this because, at first, perhaps, you will be more attracted by brilliant and glowing harmonies; and they are beautiful too. They may fill us, as those of Rubens do, with triumphant joy; or plunge us into poignant emotion as do Rousseau's

sunsets. But, just as our capacity of feeling knows no limits, so there is no limit to the variety of the tonal harmonies that may stir it. And we shall grow to find some of the most exalting and beautiful sensations in those harmonies that are very quiet, subtle, and that speak to our imagination in a "still small voice."

As a farewell illustration, to sum up the meaning of the quality and expression of tone, let me return to sound tones. Have you ever thought of quality and expression in the case of your own voice? I do not mean the singing voice. Many of us do not possess this kind of voice; but we all have a speaking and reading voice. What are the quality and expression of yours? I am thinking now of the way you use it; of the quality and expression of the sounds you utter.

When you speak; do you drawl "through your nose" or chatter very quickly? Are the sounds shrill or harsh or monotonous? Perhaps you have never stopped to consider. It is astonishing how few people do. Most people think of their voice only as a contrivance for uttering words: they turn it on and off like a faucet and let the words run. How frequently one sees a pretty girl or woman, tastefully dressed and of charming manners, who is altogether pleasing as long as she keeps her mouth shut. But the moment she opens it, half her charm vanishes. There is no tone in her voice; no varieties of light and shade in the pitch of the sounds, no varieties of quietness or warmth in her speech; no rhythm of effect. Even if it is not harsh, it is disagreeably monotonous.

Or somebody else reads a passage from Shakespeare, say *The Balcony Scene* in "Romeo and Juliet." He is not as bad a reader as he might be; for example, he does not stumble over the words or jump over the punctuation. In fact, he reads intelligently, with considerable attention to the meaning of the speeches. And yet, after all, he reads very badly, for his voice fails entirely to bring out the music of the verse. The scene is one of the loveliest ever written, and it was written to be spoken aloud, so that the loveliness of the thought might be conveyed in sounds of corresponding loveliness. But of this our reader seems ignorant. He does not appear to know that Shakespeare intended every vowel sound to be uttered in such a way as to bring out the particular quality of its beauty; and arranged the sequence of the sounds, so that one should flow into another in an

exquisite rhythm of rising and falling melody. This reader "murders" the beauty of the scene, because there is no quality in the tone of his voice and no tonal expression. Do you understand what I mean?

If you have not thought of this before, I hope you will give it some attention in future. For it is in the power of everyone of us to improve the quality and expression of our voices.

CHAPTER 17
Brush-Work and Drawing

Now that we have come to an end of our talk upon color, I must say a little about brushwork. I hope to show you that a good painter may use his brush in such a way that there is quality and expression in the actual strokes.

I say a good "painter," because I am thinking of that distinction I pointed out to you, between artists who are really painters or colorists, and those who are, more strictly speaking, draughtsmen. The latter, you will remember, pay particular attention to the lines of their figures, and then in spreading the paint, are careful that it shall not interfere with the outlines. On the other hand, the man who is, strictly speaking, a painter, sees his figures as colored masses.

I tried to show you that each method is right from its separate point of view. But at the time we talked about this, we had not studied the meaning of quality and expression. So I put off telling you about the possibilities of quality and expression in line. We will talk about it now, and then return to the brushwork.

Remember, what we are to think of now is a drawing of a figure or object, represented simply in outline, with no added strokes to suggest light and shade. It may have been done with a pencil or brush, or in one of many other ways; but it is only outline. Now many people think the only purpose of the outline is to enclose the figure, so that we may see what the figure is. They may think the figure is beautiful, because it represents something of which they are fond; the plump body of a baby, for instance. But suppose the figure represents an old worn-out beggar, with long scraggy arms and bare, misshapen feet. Would they see any beauty in it? I expect not.

Yet, although there may be no beauty in the figure, there may be a great deal in the lines which enclose it. If so, the beauty of line, of which we are now talking, must be an abstract beauty; due to something in the line itself, independently of the figure with which it is

associated.

Suppose you draw a line on a piece of paper. What is the result? The line has taken a certain direction, and it is of a certain kind. It is thick or thin, or it begins thin, grows thicker and then diminishes in width, or vice versa. It may be faint or distinct; firm or wavering, and so on. Which ever kind it is it will be so, either because you wished it to be of that kind, or because you couldn't make it otherwise. In either case, it is you that have made the line what it is. If you have enough skill, you can make the line exactly what you wish.

Again, the direction of the line is the result of a movement of your hand and arm. Very likely you moved uncertainly: you were not even sure in what direction it was moving. But, if you were a skilful and practised draughtsman, don't you suppose you could so regulate the movement of your hand and arm, that the line would take the exact direction you desired? Yes, you would have as much control over the direction and character of the line, as a musician has over the keys of a piano, over which his hands move in various directions, sounding the various notes.

But is the skill in doing this all that makes a good musician? You know that he must also play, as we say, with feeling. This means, first, that he must be able to feel the beauty of the music; secondly, that he knows how to move his arms and touch the notes so as to draw forth from them just the quality of sound that the feeling demands, and to make the whole body of sounds render an expression of the feeling.

Now, just as the feeling passes from the brain of the musician into the tips of his fingers, so it does with an artist. You will see him, as he tries to tell you about the beauty of something, circling his hand in the air, meanwhile curving his fingers and thumb, as if he were trying to grasp the beauty. It is an instinctive movement, due to his habit of expressing his conception with his hand. A sculptor will do much the same thing, only he is more apt to close his fingers and express his meaning with his thumb — the part of his hand that he uses most in modeling.

One of the most beautiful examples of feeling in the hand is illustrated in the modeling of a vase. The potter stands before a "wheel," or table, the top of which revolves. There is a spike in it that holds in

place the lump of clay. But while we watch, it has ceased to be a lump. It has grown up under the potter's hands and is a hollow vessel, every moment changing its shape slightly, as with his fingers or the palm of his hand he brings it nearer and nearer to the design that is in his brain. He stops for a moment, and we think that he has finished. But, no, he is only criticising it. It is not yet quite as he feels it should be; and again the wheel revolves and the hand, — oh! so tenderly — coaxes the clay to receive exactly the line of beauty that he feels.

And from the potter we may gain another insight into the beauty of an artist's line. I said that the clay grew up into the required form. And certainly if you have seen the operation, you will say that growth is just the word. Now in the line of all beautiful drawings there is the feeling of growth. Not in a metaphorical way, but most literally, the line grows under the artist's hand, impelled by the feeling in him that he is trying to express.

Let me tell you a little experience of my own. Though I am not an artist, I have often made drawings. One day I was enlarging a piece of ornament, in which there were scrolls of acanthus leaves; big cabbagy sort of leaves, with a curving spine and crinkly edges. The chief point was to get fine winding lines into the curves. For a long time I imitated the copy as well as I could, when suddenly I seemed to feel within me just how the curve should go. It was not a matter of seeing the copy, but of feeling the actual growth in my brain. And lo! a miracle, for one moment my hand was able to do what my brain prompted. That leaf actually grew under my hand. I could feel it growing. And of course that was the best bit of the whole drawing. The rest was mechanical; this bit really lived. Well, in my case that was a miracle and has never been repeated. But in that moment I learned two things — firstly, what must be the joy of an artist in the act of creation; and, secondly, that an artist's line may be a living growth; and, in the case of really fine draughtsmen, always is.

Since then I have watched the growth of trees and plants, and discovered, as you may for yourself, the separate beauty and character that belong to the lines of growth of each separate plant and tree. And, when you have done so, you will come back to the study of line in drawing, convinced that the beauty of line consists in its expression of life and character. Not only the life and character of the object

represented, but the life and character of feeling in the artist.

Now perhaps you will realise how a drawing, though it represents only an ugly old beggarman, may be beautiful. Life, in all its forms is wonderful, even if sometimes horrible. And the expression of it by a thing so slight as a line is beautiful, because we need not trouble about the object represented, but be satisfied to enjoy only the life and character that the line expresses.

It will also help you to understand and appreciate the abstract quality of line, if you study Japanese drawings and prints. For their way of representing figures and objects is not the same as ours, nor do we always know what the subject of the picture is about. Therefore we are better able to enjoy the line in an abstract way, apart from all consideration of the things that are represented.

After this little talk on line, we may now pass to brushwork. It is no longer the thin edge that we are to keep in mind, but the mass, great or small, as the case may be; the mass of a gown, for example, or the mass of one of its folds.

I need not tell you that an artist's hands may be alive with feeling when he holds a brush, just as when he has a pencil in them. In fact, what we have said about feeling and expression in line may be applied to brushwork. In the case of a man who is not merely a filler in of spaces with paint, but is by instinct a painter, the brushwork grows into life beneath his hand. Sometimes he lays aside his brush and takes a palette-knife, with which to spread the paint on the surface or to scrape the part already painted. Sometimes he uses no tool at all, but kneads the paint with his thumb. Whether he employs these or other methods, is a matter of comparative unimportance. The main thing for us to realise is that, whatever means he employs, it is because he is giving expression to some feeling in his mind. There is a passage of feeling from his mind through his arm to his hand, and thence to the canvas.

The swifter the passage is, the more vitality, as a rule, will there be in the brushwork. The reason is, that in such a case the artist is sure of himself. The feeling in his mind is so clearly comprehended; he so thoroughly feels what he wishes to express, and is so sure of the way to render it, that there is no hesitation or sign of fumbling in the result. It has grown freely and naturally and the result gives us that

keen and direct pleasure that we derive from what is brimful of life.

You know how stimulating it is to listen to a speaker, whose words flow from his thoughts without any humming and hawing; and whose words naturally and exactly express the thought. In such a man's talk there is a living growth of thought. As you proceed in your study of painting you will learn to feel in brushwork either the presence or absence of such living growth.

You will find sometimes, however, that the brushwork, which at first seems very much alive, is not really a living growth. It is more like the clever tricks that you perform with your bodies in a gymnasium. It is merely an exhibition of vigor. I may liken this to the oratory of another sort of speaker, who has a great gift of the gab but very few ideas. He pours out of his mouth a stream of vigorous, showy, fine-sounding words; and fascinates you for a few minutes with the "exuberance of his verbosity." But presently, when you come to think it over, you discover how pretentious and slip-shod the whole speech was. He was exhorting to patriotism; but, where Lincoln would have left us with a few choice thoughts, so perfectly expressed that they will remain for ever in the memory, this man has only bedecked his generalities with a confusion of words. His speech is not golden, but cheap tinsel.

Well! you will find that there are painters also, so much in love with the exuberance of their own cleverness, that they are satisfied to do nothing but make a gymnastic display of it.

You will find too that there are others, to whom the mere manual dexterity is so objectionable, that they deliberately try to make you lose sight of any brushwork in their pictures. Whistler was one of these. He used to say that a picture is finished, when the artist has completely disguised the means by which it has been produced. He wished the expression of his feeling to reach our imagination immediately and fully, without any other consideration blocking the way or interfering with our appreciation.

His method of painting was deliberate; a little added to-day, something more another day; the whole process extending, frequently, over several years. For the feeling which he wished to express was a very subtle one, so the living growth of it, as of many things in nature, was slow. On the other hand, most of the great painters seem

to have been swift workers; or at any rate their final result gives one the impression of having been executed in the vigor and glow of a swiftly working mind.

The best way to learn to appreciate brushwork is to stand close to a picture, and observe the various kinds of strokes and dabs and streaks. They seem to have no meaning. But step back. Then all or most of the separate brush marks will have disappeared. They are merged into one another and their meaning becomes clear. Then, after having thoroughly studied the effect which the artist has produced, you may again step close up to the canvas and examine the means by which he has attained it.

If it is a landscape you are studying, you will find, possibly, that the sky, which from a distance seems to be grey, is really composed of streaks of blue and pink and grey. It is, in the first place, by these streaks of the brush, and, secondly, by the infusion of several colors, that the artist has succeeded in making his sky have the appearance of atmosphere, extending far and far back. Then, if you examine the trees, you may possibly find the strokes short and stubby, so as to bring out the character of the foliage; while, what from a distance gave the impression of being simply green, is also found on closer inspection to contain many spots of other colors. It is in this way that the action of light upon the foliage has been suggested; so that the trees from a distance do not seem hard and heavy but penetrated with light and atmosphere.

In this way, stepping nearer to and further from the picture, and continually asking yourself: What is the impression that the artist wished to convey and why has he done so and so? you will soon find that you are getting an insight into the quality and expression of brushwork.

Now one word more. A little while ago I alluded to "finish." What is "finish"? Most people think it means that every part of a picture should be brought up to a uniform degree of polish and precision. It should be sleek and shiny, like our shoes, when the man has finished shining them.

Certainly you will see many pictures that seem to justify this explanation. But as a rule they will not be examples of good painting. You remember our talk on texture. Well, only some textures are sleek

and shiny and polished. So, if this whole picture is of that character, some of the textures must have suffered. Then again, life is not uniform, it does not show itself in all people and things in the same way. Therefore it is very likely that the uniform polish and precision of this picture has interfered with its expression of life. The whole thing is mechanical rather than vital.

So, you must be prepared to find in well painted pictures, all sorts of conditions of not seeming to be finished; all kinds of different styles, coarse, refined, bold, dashing, reticent, and tender, brilliant, and modest; almost as many different styles and conditions as there are painters. For a painter's use of the brush is an expression of his own individuality and life, as well as of the life and character of the subjects he represents.

I have already told you Whistler's definition of "finished." It is perhaps too much a product of his own personality to be of general service. One more applicable to all kinds of painters and pictures is the following. An artist has finished his picture, when he has succeeded in making it express the feeling that inspired it. This will include Whistler's definition, and also the practice of a Titian, a Rubens, or a Velasquez, whose brush strokes are visible to this day, as witnesses of the "living growth of their conceptions.

Further it will include many pictures that to your eyes seem unfinished. They look like sketches, and, therefore, you think, cannot be considered as a finished picture. But go slowly with a thought of that sort. As you advance in appreciation you will find that many a drawing of a few lines only, and many a little picture, composed of a few touches of color, have in them more of the living growth of feeling, more of the charm of abstract beauty than thousands of so-called finished pictures, in which the original feeling, if there were any, has been submerged in an ocean of trivialities.

CHAPTER 18
Subject, Motive, and Point of View

At the beginning of our talks, you may remember, I told you I should not have much to say about the subjects of pictures. For I wished at the start to make you realise, that what a picture is about is of much less importance than the way in which the subject is treated. A fine subject may be treated in such a way as to make a very bad picture, while a good picture may be composed of a subject in which one is not particularly interested. In fact, I wished to help you to look at a picture first and foremost as a work of art; a thing beautiful in itself because of its composition of form and color; beautiful in an abstract way, that is to say, apart from the ideas suggested by the subject. My aim has been to try to teach you to admire a picture in an abstract way, as you admire a Japanese or Chinese vase, simply and solely for its beauty of form and color.

This is not the usual way. Most people begin by taking interest in the subject of a picture, and very many never get any further in their appreciation. On the other hand I felt that, if I could once get you interested in the abstract qualities of a picture, you would be started right, and that your interest in the subject would be sure to follow after. So our talk about subject has been put off until now.

Pictures are sometimes sorted into groups according to their subject. There are religious pictures; pictures of myths and legends or imaginary subjects; portraits; landscapes; historical pictures, like *Washington crossing the Delaware*; genre pictures or scenes of every day life; still-life subjects, representing flowers and fruits, dead birds, beasts and fishes, and objects of man's handiwork; decorative subjects and mural paintings. But this grouping does not settle the matter, since each of these subjects can be treated in more than one way. How it is treated depends upon the motive and point of view of the artist.

So, the simplest way to grasp this matter of subject is first of all to

find out what is meant by an artist's motive and point of view. As usual, let us start with dictionary meanings of these words and then see their application to what we are discussing.

Motive, then, is that which causes a thing to move, which impels it. What is the motive power of that train? Is the power that moves it steam or electricity? What is the motive of any particular artist, the force which impels him to adopt a certain method or to work in a certain direction?

Point of view on the other hand, is the point at which a person stands to view something. You may watch a procession in the street from the point of view of a window. But the word is more often used, not of where your body stands, but of where your mind stands. According to our birth and bringing up; that is to say, as the result of what we inherit from our forebears, and have acquired by education and experience, we each have our own point of view. For example, you will not hesitate to say that your point of view is American. You read about the Panama canal. You are not only interested, but proud, because Americans are digging it. If the French, who began it, were carrying on the work, your interest in it would be less and your pride nil. When you travel abroad, at any rate for the first time, you will not be able to help making critical comparisons between the way they do things in Europe and at home. You will be apt to see everything from the point of view of an American. Your point of view is the result of your being what you are. And it is the same with an artist. Being what he is, and what he cannot help being, he has his own particular personal point of view. Being what he is, he also has his own individual motive. Through the union of motive and point of view, he sees things in his own way and in his own way is impelled to represent them.

Since each artist is a person different to all other persons, the varieties of motive and point of view are infinite. There is no end to the variety; and, as you grow older, and continue your study of pictures, you will find more and more interest in looking into and discovering just what is the particular motive and point of view of each artist. For he cannot help betraying them in his pictures, any more than you can help betraying yours, if, being a partisan of Yale, you are watching a football game between Yale and Harvard. Just as

your behavior will betray your feelings, so is a picture the expression of an artist's personal likes and dislikes. In studying pictures, therefore, you are also studying the personality of the men who painted them.

I wish you to feel that this sort of study has no limits. Its interest will last you, as long as you live. At the same time my aim is to help you to enter upon the study. And at the start everything should be made as simple as possible. So, although motives and points of view are infinite in variety, let us see if we cannot find some simple clue to the study of them. I think it may be found in dividing all artists into two big groups. On the one side, those who are inclined to represent the world as they see it to be; on the other side, those who represent things according to their own ideas. It is the great division between the *naturalistic* or *realistic* and the *idealistic* motive and point of view. Some artists are naturalists, or realists; others are idealists; a great many are a mingling of the two.

This broad general distinction must be thoroughly understood. For you can see that it would be impossible to enter into the merits of an *idealistic* picture, if you insist on approaching the study of it from the *naturalistic* point of view. And vice versa. The only way to appreciate a picture is to approach it from the point of view of the man who painted it We must try to enter into his mind and find out his motive and see the subject as he saw it.

When we have done so, we may not like his picture. That is another matter. Perhaps his motive and point of view, when we have discovered them, do not please us. Our own are so different, that he and we cannot really agree. Or possibly, while we agree with his motive and point of view, we do not feel that he has expressed them well. In either case, his picture is not for us. At least, not to-day; for, as we grow older, we shall find that our own motive and point of view are apt to change. We have studied more, and know more, and may find that pictures, we once did not care for, we now admire; and, on the other hand, that the pictures we once liked have ceased to please us.

Now for a talk about the difference between naturalistic or realistic and idealistic. When the art of painting began to revive in Italy at the end of the Thirteenth Century, the first aim of the artists was

to make their pictures more really resemble life and nature. I have already told you of Giotto, who gave roundness and natural gestures to his figures, made the objects look more real, and suggested the depth and distance of their surroundings. Next of Masaccio, who gave his figures still more resemblance to life, and filled in their surroundings with a suggestion of atmosphere. Then I told you of Mantegna, who from the study of the remains of classic sculpture gave further naturalness of life and vigor to his figures; until, by degrees, from the observation of nature and the study of the classic sculpture, artists reached proficiency in the natural rendering of the figure. So far as form was concerned, their figures were absolutely natural. But, as yet, the *naturalistic* motive and point of view had not included the seeing and rendering of nature's light. That was to come later.

On the other hand, the study of classic sculpture, while helping the progress toward naturalism, had started some artists in the direction of a new motive and point of view. For now the appreciation of the antique sculpture became increased and supplemented by the study of scholars, who were translating and explaining the newly discovered writings of the Greeks and Romans. Plato was the special favorite, and the Italians of the end of the Fifteenth Century learned from him the motive of *idealism* and the *idealistic* point of view.

They learned from his writings to think not only of things, but of ideas. Even to consider ideas of more importance than things; especially the idea of beauty. You will remember that in speaking of Raphael's *Allegory of Jurisprudence*, we said that Jurisprudence represented an abstract idea: the conception of what justice is in itself and of the qualities of Prudence, Firmness, and Temperance that it involves, apart from the machinery for making and administering the law. Men make laws, and some are good and some are bad. Even the good ones are not always perfectly administered. Today, in America, our conception or idea of law is higher than our methods of putting it in practice. Everywhere, always, men's ideals are higher than their conduct.

Ideals, then, which are the motives, resulting from ideas, represent the highest effort of man after what is best and most beautiful. Most beautiful because it is best and best because it is most beautiful.

Such was part of what artists learned from Plato. Do you see how they applied it to their art? To Leonardo da Vinci, one of the first Italian artists to become influenced by the classic spirit, the teaching appealed in some such way as the following: The idea of Beauty is separate from the things or objects in which it is manifested; just as we may have an idea of smell apart from any particular flower; or of love, apart from the object of our love. The highest ideal for an artist is to express in his pictures something of this abstract idea of beauty, to give to his figures beauty and grandeur of form and noble heads; to put them in positions of grace and dignity. He will not paint human nature as he sees it to be, with all its imperfections, but will people his pictures with a race of men and women and children of ideal beauty.

This was the motive that inspired those noble Italian pictures of the Sixteenth Century. It was from the high standpoint of abstract beauty that the artists looked at their subject. Their point of view was *idealistic*. But this was not the only thing that made their pictures noble. The artists were inspired also by a great demand on the part of the people of their day. Religion held a strong place in the hearts of the people. They called for pictures to beautify the churches and, at the same time, to teach those that could not read the beauties of religion. To-day people have learned to read, and books to a large extent serve the purpose that pictures used to do. But in those days the people needed pictures; and it was this strong need, acting like rich soil to the beautiful plant of idealism, that helped to produce these wonderful pictures. They are the most wonderful that the modern world has ever seen, just because of this union of two most strong motives — the religious need of the people and the exalted love of beauty of the artists.

But note the character of these pictures. Sometimes, for example, the Virgin is seated on a throne, surrounded by angels and apostles, saints and bishops; or at other times, Christ and his apostles are represented in some scene from the New Testament story. The first presents an entirely imaginary arrangement of the figures; the second makes no pretence to representing the scene as it may have actually occurred. The apostles, many of whom were fishermen, have heads as noble as philosophers; robes arranged in beautiful folds of drapery,

and conduct themselves with the grace and dignity of some fine classic statue. Every line, every arrangement of form and space, is designed to assist in building up a composition of ideal beauty.

Or with the same motive the artist would treat some subject of Greek mythology, such as the story of Psyche. This again was a response to a strong need of the public. Not so wide a one as the religious need, but still a strong one, for among the cultivated classes there was an intense interest in the old classic myths.

Or from the same *idealistic* point of view the artist would decorate the walls of a City Hall. To this also he was impelled by a strong public need: the desire of the citizens to express their pride in themselves and their city by means of beauty. For by this time the Italians had learned to express all their highest ideals in forms of ideal beauty.

But a change came. The Italians, long a prey to foreign enemies and quarrelling among themselves, at length lost their liberty and their pride in themselves. Other nations surpassed them in learning and culture; and even Religion lost its intense hold on the public mind. With the loss of high ideals the glory of *idealistic* painting in Italy waned and disappeared.

But artists of other lands continued to regard the *idealistic* painting of the Italians as a model of what came to be called "the Grand Style." During the Seventeenth Century Spanish artists imitated it in their religious pictures. But elsewhere it was used chiefly for great works of decoration; as by Rubens in Flanders (Belgium) and Le Brun in France. The former, for example, built up a series of magnificent compositions in honor of Marie de Medicis, the wife of Henry IV of France. They are now in the Louvre in Paris. Le Brun's vast paintings and tapestries, that decorate the palace of Versailles, were designed to extol the glory in war and peace of Louis XIV, who at the end of his long reign left his country poor and his subjects miserable.

In fact, *idealistic* painting that had once been great, because nourished by an intense religious motive or by the motive of civic pride, had sunk to being a means of flattering the vanity of monarchs or pandering to the luxury of the idle rich. So during the Eighteenth Century it continued to languish. The form alone remained, growing less and less beautiful; the old spirit of it was dead.

A new one, however, arose and had a brief spell of life, for it was

based on the awakened desire of the French people for liberty. In the years before the Revolution David painted *idealistic* pictures. He chose his subjects from the history of the Roman Republic, in order that by the example of its patriotism he might stir his own countrymen to action. The models for his figures he took from old Roman sculpture. His pictures fitted the temper of the time and helped the cause of liberty; but when Napoleon made himself Emperor David passed into his service, and the high motive for his *idealistic* pictures ceased.

Later painters have turned again to Italy, and by building up imposing arrangements of figures have tried to make the spirit of Italian idealism live again. They have not succeeded. Perhaps for two reasons. First, that the old Italian compositions are mostly of an allegorical character, and allegory does not interest the modern mind. We are interested in realities. Second, that those compositions were based on the beauty of form of the human figure; the artists made their forms as perfect as possible and placed them in an artificial arrangement that would produce a pattern or composition of beauty and dignity. But modern art is more concerned with rendering the natural appearances of the world; and, if it idealises them, does so, as we shall presently see, by means of light and atmosphere.

Meanwhile, that Seventeenth Century, in which Italian *idealistic* painting dwindled, saw a new outburst of the *naturalistic* or *realistic* motive in two parts of the world; simultaneously, in Spain and Holland.

I have already told you how Velasquez in Spain and the Dutch artists devoted themselves to the study of the persons and things actually present to their eyes. They were *realists* or *naturalists*. Holland had cut herself off from Flanders and the splendid vice-regal Court of Brussels, and her own noblemen were busy fighting for their country's freedom. So there was no demand for her artists to paint handsome decorations. She had also cut herself off from the Roman Catholic religion; and in the churches of the Reformed Faith there was no demand for great religious pictures. These two motives were lacking; but she had another one — a very strong one — the love of country and the pride of the people in themselves. It was strong enough to produce a great school of painters of little pictures, distinguished for

their great truth to nature.

Among these Dutch artists, however, was at least one who was not only a *realist* but an *idealist*. This was Rembrandt. It is of his idealism that I will speak here; and, to illustrate it, will tell you of a small religious picture in the Louvre: *The Visit to Emmaus*. You remember that Christ in the evening of the day of his Resurrection came upon two of his disciples and joined them in their walk to the village of Emmaus. Not recognising him, they talked of what had happened. It was not until the little party had reached the inn, and the Saviour raised his hands in blessing the food, that their eyes were opened and they knew him. It is this moment that Rembrandt represented.

When you see this picture you will find no grandeur in it such as the Italian pictures have. The figures are those of poor ordinary men. Rembrandt, being also a realist, drew them from the real types of poor Jews in the Ghetto, or Jew-quarter of Amsterdam. There is nothing of imposing dignity even in the Saviour's form and face. Whatever may be the idealism in the picture, it does not depend on form. Its motive is different from that of the Italians. Its motive is light. From Christ's figure spreads a light. Is not one of his titles — The Light of the World? And the light, flowing from this humble figure, illumines the faces of his humble companions and, passing up to the vaulted ceiling, sheds through the gloom a mystery of tremulous glow. The picture like the subject it celebrates, is a miracle — a miracle of light.

Do you see how this was an expression of idealism? Rembrandt in studying the world around him had discovered, like other artists of his time, the beauty of light. Light by degrees represented to him the highest element of beauty in the visible world. While the great Italians had found the ideal or highest conception of abstract beauty in form, Rembrandt found it in light. Therefore, when he painted this picture and wished to show that these figures, though humble looking, were not ordinary men, and that the event was no ordinary meeting at a village inn, he proceeded to idealise the scene according to his own conception of ideal beauty. He introduced into it the beauty and mystery of light.

Please note that word mystery. A mystery is what passes beyond our knowledge and understanding, something that cannot be grasped

by our mind and intelligence. Thus we speak of the mystery of life: scientists have discovered how the various forms of life have been developed on the earth, but the origin of life is still a mystery to them. Even when they have traced life back to the smallest conceivable beginning, they are as far off from knowing what started that smallest beginning into life. But because they do not know, do they say "Oh, what we do not know is not worth the knowing"? No indeed! they realise, that hidden in the mystery is a truth, even more wonderful than what they know.

Or again, some beautiful summer night by the sea-shore you are looking out over the water. The moon is low and her rays make a pathway of light. You gaze along it and at first the waves are clearly visible, heaving in the light; further off, the movement of the waves disappears; only a luminous glow remains, growing fainter and fainter, till far away it melts into that thin line where sky and water meet — the horizon. Do you know that horizon really means boundary, the limit of our sight, the point beyond which our eye has no power to see? But is there nothing beyond? If we took ship and sailed beyond that pathway of light, should we ever reach the horizon? We should only sail on to find the horizon continually beyond our reach.

Or we turn our gaze from the water to the sky. Above us, further than eye can travel, it extends. It is studded with innumerable stars. We may know the names of some of them, and have learned about their movements and their distance from the earth; but what do we know, what does any one, even the wisest and most learned, know of them, compared with our ignorance of them? It will be well for us, as we gaze into the mystery of the heavens, to be thinking less of the little knowledge that we have than of the miracle, the wonder, of what transcends man's understanding; of the vast, impenetrable mystery that surrounds our lives. To do so will fill us with, what we call, a spiritual joy; a joy, that is to say, which goes beyond knowledge, and affects that higher capacity of feeling that, not knowing what it is, we call spirit. This highest feeling, that we call spiritual, has always in it some element of mystery. The truth of this was curiously expressed by a little girl of my acquaintance, who was very fond of having her mother read poetry to her. I asked her if she understood a certain poem. "Of course not," was her quick reply, "what fun would there

be in poetry if you could understand it?"

Well, I have spoken at length of Rembrandt, because his way of idealising a scene through the beauty and mystery of light, has become the way of modern artists. But it was not until nearly two hundred years after his death that the world came round to this way. In the mean time Rembrandt and the other Dutch painters of his Century, like Velasquez, had been forgotten. The painters were busy trying to keep alive the other notion of idealism, the Italian one, based on form. Indeed, it was not until naturalism again became popular, that idealism by means of light was renewed.

I have already told you of the revival of *naturalism* at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century; how the English landscape painter, Constable, was followed by the French landscapists of the Barbizon-Fontainebleau group. You remember that their point of view was nature as it is visible to the eye, but their motive was also to express the feelings of love with which it inspired themselves.

Then, about the middle of the Century appeared Gustavo Courbet who loudly proclaimed himself a *realist*. He meant by this that he was not moved by sentiment, as the Barbizon naturalists were; that he believed that the only thing which concerned a painter was to paint what he could see, as it appeared to his eye alone. He wished to limit his art to what is visible to sight. So he thought it was foolish for an artist to attempt to represent a scene from the Bible or any historical subject or subject invented by the imagination. As the artist had never seen these things, he had no business, as a painter, to try and represent them. He was going outside his own art and meddling with some one else's: the art of the writer or actor, for example.

Courbet's point of view of *realism* and his motive, to paint only what he could see, were carried further by another Frenchman, Edouard Manet. He had become a student of the works of Velasquez, from whom he had learnt: firstly, a new way of viewing his subject; secondly a new way of rendering what he saw. This new way of viewing the subject is what is now called "*impressionism*."

I am sorry to have to trouble you with a new word; but I think you are prepared for it, since *impressionism* professes to be only a more natural and real way of seeing things. Of *seeing* things, that is the point. It does not take account of what things are, but of the

impression they produce upon our mind, when they appear before our eyes. You are at work in school, and a stranger enters the class room. He converses for a few minutes with the teacher and then goes out. What sort of man was he? If there are twenty children in the class, and each, on arriving home, relates the circumstance of the visit, there will probably be twenty different impressions of the visitor's appearance. They will agree in some points and differ in others; yet each one of the impressions may be a true one — as far as it goes. How far it goes will depend on the quickness and thoroughness of your observation. But anyhow, it will not include a great number of details; it will rather be a general impression.

If you look out of window into a street, you may see a number of figures on the sidewalks. You receive a general impression of figures, moving or standing still; some men, some women, representing various spots of one color. Now a *realistic* painter might say, "Each one of those figures represents a real person; I will paint him as he really is; and, to do so, will ask him to stand still long enough for me to study him exactly in all his visible details." "And if you do," retorts the *impressionist* painter, "you will paint something so real, that it will be too real. For you never could see these people in this way, if you look at them on the street. The greater part of the details would be lost in the general impression."

Well! the more you think of it, the more right you see the *impressionist* is — from his point of view. He says, if you are going to be natural, be really natural; if you want to make your pictures look real, make them real in a natural way. If the only thing in art is to be as like nature as possible, and to represent things only as they would appear, if you suddenly looked at them, the *impressionist* is right. And what makes this way of looking at things particularly interesting is the fact, that it is so often the momentary effect in nature that is most beautiful: the effect that lasts but a moment, that is fugitive or fleeting, caught in an instant, before it changes to something else. You know what I mean from your own experience. A certain expression passes over your friend's face. "Oh! if I could only photograph her now," you exclaim; but by the time you have arranged your camera, it is gone, and cannot be brought back to order. Well, it is just that fugitive, fleeting expression of a subject that the *realist*, who is an

impressionist, tries to represent in his pictures.

So far I have tried to explain the *impressionist's* point of view, now let us consider his way of *rendering* what he sees. The whole secret of it is the part which light plays in the appearance of things. Manet and the other impressionists, among whom Claude Monet and Whistler are the most important, see every thing, as Vermeer did, enveloped in light. But they have gone further than he.

They have studied much more closely the ever varying qualities of light, as it differs according to place and season and even time of day. Monet has painted a series of pictures the subject of every one of which is the same haystack. At least that is how some people might describe them. But, if they enter into Monet's point of view, they would say that the real subject is not the haystack but the effect of light upon its surface, and, as the effect of light is different in every case, none of the pictures are similar to one another. Each represents a separate fugitive expression of light. Monet, in them and other pictures, has recorded with extraordinary subtlety the impression presented to his eye. For Monet's *impressionism* was also *naturalistic*.

Whistler, on the other hand, with no less subtlety, rendered also the impression that the things seen had made on his imagination. He was an *idealistic impressionist*. He painted, for example, a number of night-scenes, or "nocturnes," as he called them. The actual objects in them are of less importance than Monet's haystack, because in the dim light of twilight or night they are only faintly visible. Whistler did not wish us to be aware of the form of the bridge, or the boat, the sea and shore, or whatever the objects may be. He wished us to be conscious of them only as Presences looming up like spirit-forms in the mystery of the uncertain light. Such nocturnes as Battersea Bridge and the sea-shore picture, *Bognor-Nocturne*, appeal to us like Rembrandt's *Visit to Emmaus*. Just as the latter's forms were humble, so the bridge itself is an ordinary sort of structure, and the sea-shore and the boats are without any unusual distinction. Yet in each case the scene has been idealised through the mystery of light, and appeals to our spiritual imagination. After two hundred years Rembrandt's new principle of idealization, founded upon the abstract beauty of light instead of on the abstract perfection of form, has been accepted by modern artists.



Evening, Anton Mauve

To a greater or less degree all artists, whether *naturalists* or *idealists*, who are painting in the modern spirit have been influenced by Monet and Whistler. The example of these two has spread far and wide the study and rendering of light. But, while their followers agree in this motive, they are independent in their points of view. There are some whose point of view, like Monet's, is *objective*. They are content to render the *impression* made upon their eyes. But, as their eyes see differently from Monet's, their pictures are different from his. Each is the record of a separate personality. Equally, while others, like Whistler are *subjective*, recording the *impression* produced upon their minds, their pictures vary according to the character and quality of their separate minds. In fact, in later times, a notable feature of painting is its diversity of motives and points of view.

Let me try to explain this. Ever since the American and French Revolutions, there has been a gradually increasing interest in what we call individuality. The main object of these revolutions was to establish the right of each and every individual to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and the idea of government now is to give every individual the chance of making the most of his or her possibilities. Your teachers, for example, are not running their classes as machines; they are trying to make a personal study, so far as possible, of each one of you, in order to help you to develop your particular individuality. For a long time this has been the principle of education and government. The result is that there has been a universal increase in individuality, since numbers of people who had some special possibility have had a chance to develope it. To-day, in fact, there is probably nothing that counts more than individuality. This being so it is natural that we should look for it in art And, if we do, we shall find it.

In former times there were "schools of art." In Italian art, we speak, for example, of the Florentine School, the Venetian School, the Roman School; or we speak of the Flemish School, and Dutch Schools and so on. In each case the artists, living in a certain city or country, had sufficient resemblance among themselves in their motives and methods of painting to produce a certain separate style. So, to-day, if an expert sees an old picture, he is able to say at once and, more often than not correctly, that it belongs to such and such

a school.

But an expert of a hundred years hence, when he sees our modern pictures, will not speak of Schools. He may see at once that the picture is by an American, a German, or a French artist, for difference of race and habit of life and thought do still stamp in a general way the pictures of each separate country. But even within the limits of any one country there are as many varieties of motive and point of view as there are individuals.

So in modern times, more than ever before, there is an individual, personal note in pictures, just as there is in books. The artist makes the picture an expression of his own personal feelings. This is one reason why modern pictures are inferior to the old ones in grandeur and dignity. The older ones were not only larger in size, as a rule, but they were impersonal, like a fine building is. The architects who designed the Capitol at Washington put their own personal expression into it. But we do not feel it, as we look at their work. On the contrary, it is the impersonal, monumental dignity of the work that impresses us. But in most modern pictures, instead of what is impersonal, we receive a distinct impression of intimacy, of sharing the artist's feeling. And it is the expression of this that we not only look for but enjoy discovering. We often speak of it as the sentiment of the picture.

This sentiment may be of all sorts and shades of feeling, "from grave to gay, from lively to severe." It may be romantic in spirit, appealing to us through the suggestion of what is weird and surprising; it may be full of the tenderness or of the trumpet call of poetry; it may invite us to gentle reverie, or stir in us a profound and poignant emotion. But I have said enough to point your way.

In conclusion let me sum up the contents of this long chapter. We have seen that there are two main streams of motive and point of view; the *idealistic* and the *naturalistic*. The former flows from the artist's desire to represent his conception of ideal beauty, the latter from his love of nature. We have seen that they have alternately reached their highest flood, because the conditions of the times supplied a great public need to which each in turn responded. Lastly, we have seen that gradually both tendencies have undergone a change. Whereas originally both the naturalistic and the idealistic

motive were concerned with form, they came to be concerned particularly with light.

Therefore, when you look at a picture, ask yourself: Has the artist simply tried to render the visible appearance, or has he also tried to make the subject interpret some feeling of his own?

If he is simply rendering the visible appearance: Has he been conscious only of form, or has he viewed the form in its envelope of lighted atmosphere? Further, has he tried to represent the visible appearance, as we should find it to be, if we studied each and every part of it separately; or he has tried to give the impression of the entire scene, as it really reached his eyes?

If he is interpreting through the subject his own feeling: What is the quality of the feeling? Does the picture simply express the artist's consciousness of the grandeur or the loveliness of nature, or does it also interpret his feeling for the mystery of things not seen?

Here are a few hints for you in setting out to explore the vast country of motive and point of view.

How to Study Pictures

BY MEANS OF A SERIES OF COMPARISONS OF PAINTINGS AND PAINTERS FROM CIMABUE TO MONET, WITH HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARIES AND APPRECIATIONS OF THE PAINTERS' MOTIVES AND METHODS

By Charles H. Caffin

Author's Note

Some experience in lecturing has impressed upon me several points. In the first place, the majority of students have not the time to make an exhaustive study; while those who intend to do so ultimately, still need to begin with a simple summary that shall spread before them the salient features of the subject and afford a firm groundwork on which to build. Instead, therefore, of multiplying names, I have confined myself to fifty -six, which are pivotal ones by reason of what these artists accomplished or of their influence upon others. The selection must not be regarded as an attempt to pick out a list of the most famous names in painting; my real aim being to unfold the gradual progress of the art, to show how various motives have from time to time influenced artists, and how the scene of vital progress has shifted from country to country. I have tried to present a survey of the whole field of painting, not to write, a history of artists or schools.

Again, while the student is buried in the history of one school, it is difficult for him to bear in mind what is being done by contemporary artists in other schools. Accordingly, as often as possible, I have treated side by side contemporary men of different nationalities, trying to show in each case something of the differences of environment and personality, and of motive and method. In this way also, I hope, the panoramic character of the story is increased.

Lastly, "by their works ye shall know them." An artist desires to be known and estimated by his works. Also it may be more use fid to study pictures than lives of artists, because an appreciation of one picture leads to that of many. Therefore 1 have tried to combine with the historical aspects of the subject the matter which is usually treated separately in books of "How to study pictures."

I have adopted the parallel method: "Look on this picture and on this." Not, as a rule, to suggest that one is more admirable than another; but to stimulate interest and the faculty of observation, and to

show how various are the motives which have prompted artists and the methods which they have adopted. In the sum total of comparisons I have tried to include as many as possible of the motives and methods which have from time to time prevailed, so that the student may gain a basis of appreciation from which to extend his observations with understanding and enjoyment.

For the object of study should be to put oneself in touch with each artist in turn, to enter into his point of view J to see as far as possible with his eyes, and to estimate his work, not for what it does not contain, hut for what it does. In this way only can our appreciation of painting become catholic and intelligent. Then, we are no longer content to say "I know what I like," but "I know why I like"; and our likings are multiplied.

As we discover more and more of the diverse ways in which artists have put a portion of themselves, of their own lives, into their pictures, our appreciation becomes indefinitely enlarged, our sympathies continually broadened, our enjoyment perpetually increased. Thus may we enter into the life of the artist and reinforce our own lives.

Charles H. Caffin.
Mamaronecky, N.Y.

CHAPTER 1
Introduction

"Having eyes, see ye not?"

The world is full of beauty which many people hurry past or live in front of and do not see. There is also a world of beauty in pictures, but it escapes the notice of many, because, while they wish to see it, they do not know how.

The first necessity for the proper seeing of a picture is to try and see it through the eyes of the artist who painted it. This is not a usual method. Generally people look only through their own eyes, and like or dislike a picture according as it does or does not suit their particular fancy. These people will tell you: "Oh! I don't know anything about painting, but I know what I like"; which is their way of saying: "If I don't like it right off, I don't care to be bothered to like it at all."

Such an attitude of mind cuts one off from growth and development, for it is as much as to say: "I am very well satisfied with myself, and quite indifferent to the experiences and feelings of other men." Yet it is just this experience and feeling of another man which a picture gives us. If you consider a moment you will understand why. The world itself is a vast panorama, and from it the painter selects his subject: not to copy it exactly, since it would be impossible for him to do this, even if he tried. How could he represent, for example, each blade of grass, each leaf upon a tree? So what he does is to represent the subject as he sees it, as it appeals to his sympathy or interest; and if twelve artists painted the same landscape, the result would be twelve different pictures, differing according to the way in which each man had been impressed by the scene; in fact, according to his separate point of view or separate way of seeing it, influenced by his individual experience and feeling.

It is most important to realize the part which is played by these

two qualities of experience and feeling. Experience, the fullness or the deficiency of it, must affect the work of every one of us, no matter what our occupation may be. And if the work is of a kind which appeals to the feelings of others, as in the case of the preacher, the writer, the actor, the painter, sculptor, architect or art-craftsman, the musician or the dancer, it must be affected equally by the individual's capacity of feeling and by his power of expressing what he feels.

Therefore, since none of us can include in ourselves the whole range of possible experience and feeling, it is. through the experience and the feeling of others that we deepen and refine our own. It is this that we should look to pictures to accomplish, which, as you will acknowledge, is a very different thing from offhand like or dislike. For example, we may not be attracted at first, but we reason with ourselves: "No doubt this picture meant a good deal to the man who painted it; it embodies his experience of the world and his feeling toward the subject. It represents, in fact, a revelation of the man himself; and, if it is true that 'the noblest study of mankind is man,' then possibly in the study of this man, as revealed in his work, there may be interest for me."

I am far from wishing you to suppose that all pictures will repay you for such intimate study. We may get inside the man to find that his experience of life is meager, his feeling commonplace and paltry. There are not a few men of this sort in the occupation of art, just as in every other walk of life, and their pictures, so far as we ourselves are concerned, will be disappointing. But among the pictures which have stood the test of time we shall always find that the fruits of the artist's experience and feeling are of a kind which makes lasting appeal to the needs of the human heart and mind, and that this fact is one of the causes of their being held in so high esteem. There is also another cause.

If only experience and feeling were necessary to make an artist, many of us would be better artists than a considerable number of those who follow the profession of art. But there is another necessity — the power of expressing the experience and feeling. This, by its derivation from the Greek, is the primary meaning of the word "art": the capacity to "fit" a form to an idea. The artist is the "fitter" who gives Shape and construction to the tenuous fabric of his

imagination; and this method of "fitting" is his technic.

So the making of a picture involves two processes: a taking in of the impression and a giving of it out by visible expression; a seeing of the subject with the visual and mental eye, and a communicating of what has been so seen to the visual and mental eyes of others; and both these processes are influenced by the experience and feeling of the artist and make their appeal to our own. And, I think, it should be clear from what we have been saying that the beauty of a picture depends much less upon its subject than upon the artist's conception and treatment of it. A grand subject will not of itself make a grand picture, while a very homely one, by the way in which it has been treated, may impress us profoundly.

The degree of beauty in a picture depends, in fact, upon the feeling for beauty in the artist and upon his power to express it. I have spoken of these two qualifications as if they influenced the picture separately; but, as a matter of fact, conception and technic are blended together in a picture, and as we pursue our study, we shall find ourselves embracing them simultaneously.

But at the outset we must proceed step by step, alternately studying the conception and the technic; and, in order that we may discover how variously, at successive times and in diverse countries, different men have conceived of life and have expressed their feeling and experience in pictures, I propose that we shall study them through a series of comparisons.

Our plan, therefore, will be:

> "Look here, upon this picture, and on this";

not to decide offhand which we like the better, for in some cases perhaps we may not like either, since they were painted in times so remote from ours as to be outside our habit of understanding; but in order that we may get at the artist's way of seeing in each case, and reach some appreciation of his methods. In this way I hope that we may be able to piece together the story of modern painting; beginning with its rebirth in the thirteenth century, when it emerged from the darkness of the middle ages, and following it through its successive stages in different countries down to our own day.

It will very much increase the usefulness of this method if the

student can obtain reproductions of other work by each artist, so as to test, by a particular study of them, the general principles that are being discussed.

CHAPTER 2

Giovanni Cimabue / Giotto Di Bondone

1240(?) – 1302(?) Italian School of Florence

1266(?) – 1337 Italian School of Florence

For the first comparison I invite you to study the two examples of *The Madonna Enthroned* — one by Cimabue, the other by his pupil Giotto. Both are painted on wooden panels in distemper — that is to say, with colors that have been mixed with some gelatinous medium, such as the white and the yolk of an egg beaten up together; for it was not until the fifteenth century that the use of oil as a medium was adopted. The colors used in Giotto's panel are tints of blue and rose and white; in Cimabue's the blues and reds are deep and dusky; the background in each case being golden.

We notice at once a general similarity between these two pictures, not only in choice of subject, but in the manner of presentation: Madonna, the queen of heaven, upon a throne; her mantle drawn over her head; her right hand resting on the knee of the infant Saviour, who has two fingers of his right hand raised in the act of blessing; kneeling angels at the foot, and figures in tiers above them; all the heads being surrounded by the nimbus, or circular cloud of light, symbolic of their sacred character.

The reason of this general similarity is, that the choice of subject and the manner of its presentation were fixed by tradition; and long before this thirteenth century the tradition of Greek art had been lost, and in place of it was the Byzantine tradition, interpreted and enforced by the Christian church.

Briefly, the cause of the change was this. Greek art and Greek religion were indissolubly connected. The gods and goddesses were represented as human beings of a higher order; physical perfection was the ideal alike of religion and art. Therefore Christianity, in waging war upon heathenism, could not help attacking its art. Moreover,

as the morals of the Empire became baser and baser, Christianity was driven more and more toward asceticism; meeting the ideal of physical perfection with the spiritual ideal of mortifying the flesh. So that pagan art, which itself had grown grosser as morals declined, became an object of exceeding hatred to the church. But some form of pictorial representation was needed to bring the truths of religion before the eyes of the faithful, and the church found what it required in the art of Byzantium.

This city was the gateway between the eastern and the western world, and the original Greek character of its art was speedily influenced by artists from the Orient. Now the ideals of the East and West are very different. Briefly, the longing of the East is for the Ultimate and Universal, while the West loves to dwell on the Particular, and to dwell upon the means rather than the end. While the Greek artist carved or painted some particular form, striving to give it perfection of shape in every part, so that through a series of means he might express his ideal of physical and spiritual perfection, the artist of the East reached his ideal through the abstract perfection of beautiful lines, of beautiful patterns of form and color. Thus, the one art is represented most characteristically by the sculpture on the Parthenon, the other by a decorated porcelain vase.

The arrival therefore, at Byzantium, of this art, so far removed from the Greek and Roman study of the human form, so beautifully decorative, was hailed by the church, both for the decorating of its sacred buildings and for the illuminating of the sacred manuscripts; and it was as decorators and illuminators that the Byzantine artists did their finest work. But, as the study of the nude figure had been abandoned, the ignorance of the artists regarding the real character of the human form increased; their types of figure became less and less like nature, and more and more according to a convention established by the church. Asceticism was preached, so the figure must be thin and gaunt, the gestures angular, the expression of the emaciated faces one of painful ecstasy. Moreover, there were certain dogmas to be enforced, and the church gradually dictated the manner of their representation; so that in time all that was required of or permitted to a painter was to go on producing certain conventional subjects in a purely conventional way. The divorce of art from nature was

complete, and the independence of the artist lost in the domination of the church.

The story of the Italian Renaissance, which commenced at the end of the thirteenth century, relates how the artist gradually emancipated himself and his art, giving new life to the latter by inoculating it with nature and with something of the classic spirit.

Now, therefore, we can understand why these two pictures of *The Madonna Enthroned* by Cimabue and Giotto are so similar in arrangement. They followed the tradition prescribed by the church. Yet the Florentines of Cimabue's day found his picture so superior to anything they had seen before, so much more splendid in color, if not much nearer to the true representation of life, that when it was completed they carried it in a joyous procession from the artist's home through the streets of Florence, and deposited it with ceremony in the Cappella de' Rucellai in the Church of Santa Maria Novella. The English artist Lord Leighton, in his picture commemorating the event, has represented Cimabue walking in front of the Madonna, with his pupil Giotto at his side; and in the procession appears Dante, who left this mention of the two:

> Cimabue thought
> To laud it over painting's field; and now
> The cry is Giotto's, and his name eclipsed.
> Purgatorio, XI, 94. *(Cary.)*

The story is that Cimabue had chanced upon the boy as, like David of old, he watched his flock upon the mountain; and he found him drawing the form of one of the goats upon a rock with a sharp piece of slate. The master must have found some hint of genius in the work, for he straightway asked the boy if he would like to be his pupil; and, having received a glad assent and the father's permission, carried him off to Florence to his *bottegha*. This, the artist's studio of that period and for long after, was rather what we should call a workshop, in which the pupils ground and prepared the colors under the master's direction; and it was not until they had thoroughly mastered this branch of the work — a procedure which in Giotto's time was supposed to occupy about six years — that they were permitted to use the brushes. How often, as he worked in the gloom of the *bottegha*,

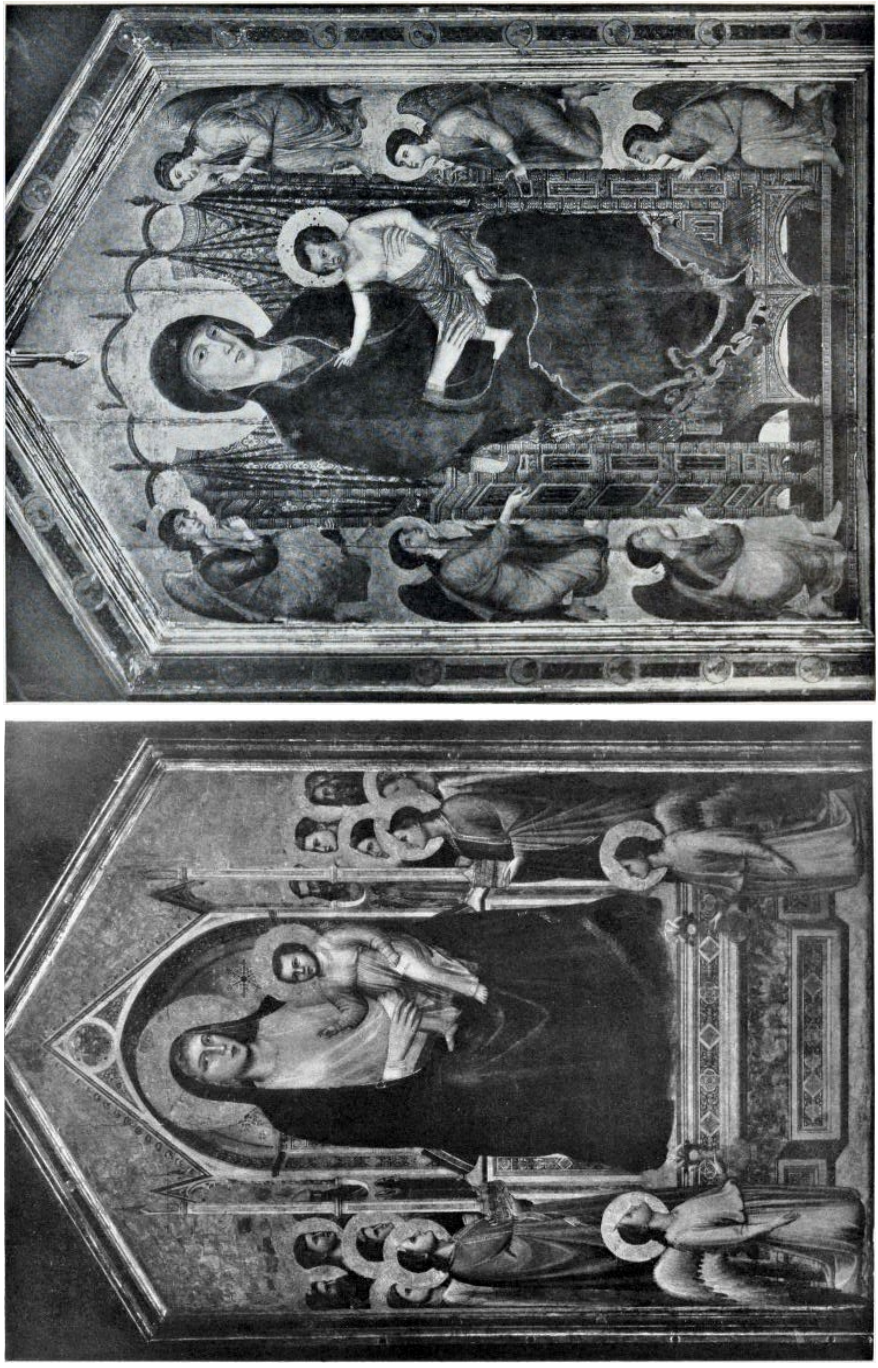
must the shepherd boy have peeped wistfully at the master standing in the shady garden, before a great glory of crimson drapery and golden background, and wondered if he should ever himself acquire such marvelous skill.

He was destined to accomplish greater things, for his young mind had not been tutored to traditions, nor his young eyes constrained to admire the conventional. In the free air of the mountains the boy's spirit had wandered where it listed, and the eager eyes had learned to love and study nature. It was the love of form that had set him to try and picture a goat upon the surface of the rock; it was the actual appearance of objects that he sought to render when, in due time, he learned to use the brush.

If you turn again to a comparison of his Madonna with that of Cimabue, you will see what strides he had already made toward natural truth. Observe how the figure of the Virgin is made real to us, notwithstanding that it is covered, as in Cimabue's, with drapery; and that, while the Christ-child in Cimabue's picture is partially nude, its form is not nearly so strong and firm and lifelike as in Giotto's, though his is enveloped in a garment. And if you examine the other figures in his picture you will find the same suggestion of substantial form that could be touched and grasped in the arms. Notice, further, how Giotto's feeling for truth has affected his arrangement of the forms. The throne actually occupies space of three dimensions — length, breadth, and thickness; so do all the figures, and they rest firmly upon the ground; the artist has called in the aid of perspective to enforce the reality of his group.

Now, how has he accomplished this appearance of reality? By the use of light and shade, and by making his lines functional — expressive, that is to say, of the structure and character of the object. Compare, for example, the figure of the infant Saviour in the two pictures. In Cimabue's the drapery is scored with lines which vaguely hint at folds and obscure the shape of the limbs beneath; but in Giotto's certain parts of the figure are made to project by the use of high lights, and others are correspondingly depressed by shade, while the lines of the drapery serve to indicate the shape of the form beneath.

Now, how has he accomplished this appearance of reality? By the use of light and shade, and by making his lines functional —



Top: Madonna Enthroned, Cimabue
Bottom: Madonna Enthroned, Giotto

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This use of light and shade by Giotto, while it marks a distinct advance from the flat pattern-like painting of the Byzantine school, is still rudimentary; and, as if conscious of the fact, the artist has selected the most simple arrangements of drapery. Indeed, breadth and simplicity are characteristic of the whole picture. It was painted probably during the years of his apprenticeship to Cimabue, or, at any rate, under his influence, and shows much less freedom and assurance than the works of his maturity. These are to be found in frescoes upon the walls of the Upper and Lower Churches at Assisi; the Arena Chapel, Padua; the Bardi and Peruzzi Chapels, S. Croce; and the Chapel of the Bargello, Florence. Giotto was the first to introduce the faces of contemporaries into his pictures, and the *Paradise* on the walls of the Bargello contains the famous portrait of Dante in his early manhood. It had remained covered with whitewash for two hundred years, until once more brought to light in 1840. All these paintings were executed in fresco — that is to say, on the plaster before it was dry, with water-colors mixed in a glutinous medium, so that as the surface hardened the colors became incorporated in it. While the technical knowledge displayed in them is rudimentary, they are so simple and unaffected, so earnest and large in feeling, and tell the story with such dramatic effect, that they command the interest and enthusiasm of the modern student.

In his own day Giotto's fame as a painter was supreme; he had numerous followers, and these Giotteschi, as they were styled, perpetuated his methods for nearly a hundred years. But, like all the great men of the Florentine school, he was a master of more than one craft. "Forget that they were painters," writes Mr. Berenson, "they remain great sculptors; forget that they were sculptors, and still they remain architects, poets, and even men of science." The beautiful

Campanile, which stands beside the Cathedral in Florence, and represents a perfect union of strength and elegance, was designed by Giotto and partly erected in his lifetime. Moreover, the sculptured reliefs which decorate its lower part were all from his designs, though he lived to execute only two of them. Thus, architect, sculptor, painter, friend of Dante and of other great men of his day, Giotto was the worthy forerunner of that galaxy of brilliant men who thronged the later days of the Italian Renaissance.

CHAPTER 3
Tommaso Masaccio / Andrea Mantegna

1401(?) – 1428(?) Italian School of Florence

1431-1506 Italian School of Padua

Since the death of Giotto nearly a hundred years have elapsed, during which his followers in Florence and certain painters in Siena, notably the brothers Lorenzetti, have been continuing the effort to emancipate painting from the flat formalism of Byzantine art. But, although they have learned something more about expressing the roundness of form, have studied more closely the action of light upon objects and the expression and character of faces, and have begun to acquire some insight into the principles of foreshortening and perspective, they are inferior to Giotto in originality of feeling and grandeur of design. He had been a solitary genius.

However, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, there arose in Florence a new genius, who became to this centurv what Giotto had been to the fourteenth. At a bound he leaped above all competitors, set painting free from its shackles, and continued to be a stimulus to hosts of other painters, including Michelangelo and Raphael. This new genius was Masaccio; and he, after his short life of twenty-seven years, was followed by the Paduan Mantegna; this man, too, a genius, whose influence was wide-spread. By these two men painting was completely emancipated and set upon that sure and certain path along which it marched with gathering splendor toward the climax of the High Renaissance of the sixteenth century.

The great achievement of both these men, the original force from which all other improvements followed, was to realize for themselves and to impress upon others the independent dignity of painting as an art. Hitherto it had been regarded as the handmaid of religion, its highest function to set before the eyes of men the doctrines of the church. We have seen to what a condition it had thus been brought

under Byzantine influences. Nor was Giotto able to do more than accept this secondary use of painting and then try to infuse more life into it. A century had to drag its length before Masaccio and Mantegna could say, in effect: "Before everything else we are painters; practisers of an art that, like sculpture, but much more than it, can make the external appearances of things visible to the eye. The invisible things of the spirit we will embody in our pictures if we can, but it is not with them that painting is first concerned. Its first duty is to develop that which belongs exclusively to itself. The teaching of doctrine, the telling of sacred stories and legends, we share with the men who use spoken or written words, and their power in this respect is fuller than ours; the suggestion of beautiful thoughts is quite as much, and more, within the power of the musician; but the representation of the external appearance of things, and especially of humanity, the crown of things, is the one point in which painting excels all other modes of expression. This is its special province; and our aim as painters must be, first and foremost, to represent the external appearances of things. This is at once our peculiar province and delight."

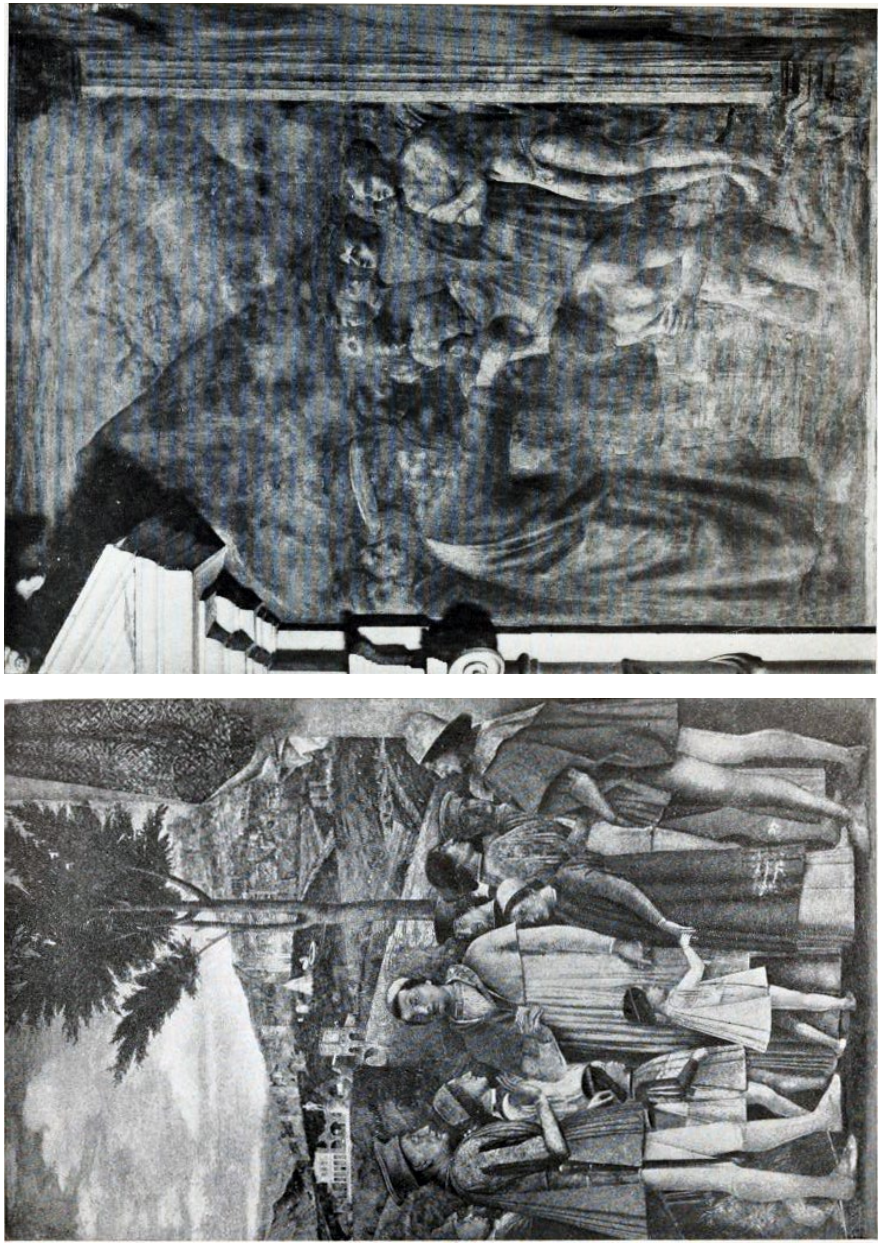
The joy of the painter in external things, we shall find, was shared at this time by thousands who were not painters. It was a symptom of the age. But, before discussing it, let us turn to the two pictures: Masaccio's *St. Peter Baptizing the Heathen* and Mantegna's *Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, Welcoming Home from Rome his Son, the Cardinal Francesco.* The former is religious in subject; but is it not clear that what chiefly occupied Masaccio's mind was to represent the incident as it may actually have occurred, with real men conducting themselves as they naturally might do under the circumstances? Observe especially the young man on the right with his arms crossed. In the first place, it is an enormous advance on Byzantinism that the artist, in this figure and the kneeling one, has represented the nude. Giotto had made a tentative step in this direction when, in his picture of the Entombment, he painted the figure of Christ nude as far as the waist. But here the baptism justified a nude representation of the whole of the figure, and Masaccio made full use of the opportunity. Note also in each case with what a regard for character as well as correctness of form; with an intent to make the nude a vehicle of expression.

Compare the reverential composure of the young man who kneels with the trembling attitude of the other who stands on the bank shivering and nervously waiting his turn. Moreover, in each case, note the truth to nature represented in the pose: the shoulders, being drawn forward, are balanced by the bending of the knees and the drawing back of the body. For the present it will be sufficient to contrast with these nude figures the grand figure of St. Peter. The drapery is broadly and simply treated, as in Giotto's paintings, but with still greater ease and fluency of lines and masses that more thoroughly suggest the attitude and bulk of form of the figure. Lastly, observe the dignity of the saint's head, and the character and individuality portrayed in all the faces. It is humanity for its own sake, as separately represented in the individual, not the use of form for symbolical purposes, that interested Masaccio. With him painting became emancipated finally from Byzantinism. When we turn to the Mantegna, it is probably again the character and individuality of the heads which first arrest our attention. They are portraits of the marquis, his sons, and courtiers: not beautiful, except perhaps in the case of the youth in the foreground. He is already a prothonotary of the holy see at Rome, one of the twelve ecclesiastical clerks who keep a record of the pontifical proceedings, and is destined to be a bishop. The gravity of life has weighed his young face with seriousness; in remarkable contrast to his elder brother, the Cardinal Francesco. The latter is soft and fleshly, as if fond of easy living; we are not surprised to learn that he is a lover of music, a connoisseur and collector of works of art, a man of refined and comfortable tastes. The faces of these two sons are curiously reflected in the stern, strong, but not untender head of the old father on the left, while the two little children have a strange infantile resemblance to the other members of the family. The remainder of the group consists of courtiers, men of pronounced character, shrewd and masterful. Throughout the whole there is a tendency toward stiff attitudes and liny draperies, at first sight not agreeable; but there is no mistaking the reality of these people; and we shall better appreciate the picture when we have discovered the influence that helped to form Mantegna's style.

It was through the lessons learned from sculpture that painting recovered its independent force. Both Masaccio and Mantegna

displayed their genius by making these lessons so completely their own that they themselves became the models for succeeding painters. Being a Florentine, Masaccio must have been familiar from childhood with the bronze doors of the Baptistery by Andrea Pisano, the finest sculptural work of the fourteenth century in Italy; and, before he began the painting of *St. Peter*, Ghiberti had finished the first pair of his doors for the same Baptistery, and Donatello had executed, among other works, his statue of *St. George*. The last-named is remarkable for its naturalistic and at the same time elevated treatment of the human figure in the complete round, while Ghiberti's pictorial panels, which Michelangelo thought worthy of decorating the Gates of Paradise, no less naturalistic than the *St. George*, are richly elaborate compositions containing numerous figures — in some cases as many as a hundred — associated with architecture and landscape. The *St. George* is an example of the grandeur of form in the round; Ghiberti's work, of the illusion which can be produced by varying the elevation of the surfaces, so that, although nothing is in the round, everything has the appearance of being; and also by regu-lating the direction of lines and the gradations of planes, so that the scene depicted seems to extend back in a distant perspective. This latter quality is conspicuous in Masaccio's as compared with earlier work. There is no longer a stretching of the figures across the picture in a flat band, almost on the same plane, with other figures placed above them, whose position in a further plane is only indicated by a diminution of their size; instead, a natural and concentrated grouping, in which the figures and landscape occupy in a natural way their several planes in the receding space. For this picture is no longer flat, but hollow and filled with air. Whatever Masaccio may have learned from the sculptors, this he gained from a direct study of nature. He proved himself a true painter by the skill with which he surrounded his figures with air and represented the varying effects of light upon the different objects. And these qualities, added to his knowledge of the human form and his strong, sincere treatment of it in composition and drawing, are the secrets of his greatness.

His chief works are the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel of the Church of the Carmine in Florence, of which this *St. Peter* is one: a series finished later by Filippino. In 1428 he was summoned to Rome,



Top: St. Peter Baptizing the Heathen, Masaccio
Bottom: Gonzaga Welcoming His Sons, Mantegna

and all further knowledge of "Careless Thomas" (for that is the meaning of his name) ceases. It was nearly fifty years before a worthy successor to him appeared in Florence, and meanwhile the story shifts to Padua and to Mantegna.

In 1305 Giotto had gone to that city and commenced the series of thirty-eight frescoes in the Chapel of the Arena, which are among his most famous works. But they bore no immediate fruit in Padua. More than a hundred years afterward, however, one Squarcione, a tailor and embroiderer, began to take an interest in art. Having considerable means, he proceeded to make a collection of pictures; and, traveling through Italy and, some say, Greece, made drawings and took casts of ancient marbles. Returned to Padua, he placed these on exhibition and opened a school of art. The most famous of his pupils was Andrea Mantegna, the son of a small farmer. The master had thought so highly of the boy that he adopted him as a son, thereby securing additional control over his labors. His shrewdness was justified, for at the age of twenty-one the young man was already executing important work on behalf of his master. The latter, in time, received a commission to decorate the chapel of the Ovetari family in the Church of the Eremitani; and here, quite close to the garden inclosing Giotto's chapel, Squarcione's pupils painted a series of frescoes, which became to the painters of North Italy what those by Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel were to Florence.

At the commencement of this series, which was designed to represent incidents in the lives of St. Christopher and St. James, the master's best pupil was Niccolo Pizzolo, whose most promising career was cut short in a street brawl; but before the work's completion it was clear that the greatest of all was Mantegna. While the latter was still engaged upon this work, he made the acquaintance of the Venetian painter Jacopo Bellini, who, with his two sons, later to be so famous in the annals of Venetian painting. Gentile and Giovanni, was then sojourning in Padua. The acquaintance ripened into a close attachment, which was cemented by Mantegna's marriage to Jacopo's daughter.

His growing reputation caused him to be summoned to Verona, and while he was working in that city there came an invitation, frequently repeated, from Lodovico Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua. For,

by this time, the municipal authority of the free cities, which had flourished during the fourteenth century, had been usurped by powerful families.

> The Communes, the Republics of Italy, after their period of self-assertion, of glory, of intense localized energy and furious internecine rivalry, began to get exhausted, to decay, to become weaker and weaker, by degrees to disappear altogether. And in their place there sprang up everywhere the great princely houses — the Medici of Florence, the Visconti and the Sforza at Milan, the Este at Ferrara, the Bentivogli at Bologna, the Montefeltri at Urbino, the Baglioni at Perugia, the Malatesta at Rimini and Cesena, and the Gonzaghi at Mantua.[12]

These despots intrenched themselves in castles to overawe the cities which they ruled, continually threatened by the outward attacks of one another, and by attempts at poisoning or assassination from enemies within. Yet they maintained magnificent courts, surrounding themselves with scholars, poets, and painters.

> In the strange and frightful isolation in which the Italian despot often lived, ever plotting himself to keep his insecure throne, ever watching against plots within the city and without, this brilliant society of dependants became his solace and his highest pleasure. Traverse that wonderful palace of the house of Este — intact, surrounded by its moat, dominating with its insolent pride the old city of Ferrara. Into the upper galleries and banquet-halls the sunlight pours. We seem to hear the musical laughter, the rustle of the rich old cinque-cento costumes; the walls are hung with paintings by Dosso Dossi or Titian — naked wrestlers, figures running, and the radiant deities of the old reawakened mythology. And below, beneath even the moat, lies the other side of the picture: the horrible dungeons, dark, noisome, shadowy, where the political conspirator, the inconvenient relative,

[12] Selwyn Brinton.

> the too outspoken citizen, the suspected wife, were thrust, and — soon forgotten.
>
> Yet within some such courts this life must often have been very brilliant and wonderful. At Mantua the marquis had brought from Padua the great Greek and Latin scholar, Vittorino da Feltre, to be tutor to his children. A villa was allotted to the household, and a system of education commenced which deserved the admiration and fame it soon gained. Besides the rich and noble youths who thronged to Vittorino, no less than sixty poor scholars were fed, clothed, and taught at his own expense. Plain living and high thinking were there the rule; diet and physical exercises — wrestling, fencing, swimming, riding — were carefully considered; the highest classic authors, Virgil and Homer, Cicero and Demosthenes, were revered as the supremest masters of style.[13]

Into this refined society of scholars and courtiers was Mantegna summoned, and in the service of this marquis and of three of his successors he remained, with the exception of two years spent in Rome, until the end of his life.

In the atmosphere of such a court he was completely at home, for here were focused into a brilliant epitome the great forces which, during this century, were leavening the whole of Italy and were also at work in Mantegna himself. These were, first of all, the moral qualities of self-assertion, belief in the dignity of man and in the grand possibilities of life, intense earnestness and eager seriousness; secondly, the mighty influence of the rediscovered Latin authors, and particularly of the Greek, the consequent admiration and worship of the antique, and the conviction that in it was to be found the key to unlock all the glorious possibilities of the modern life.

Mantegna, as we have seen, had been nourished upon antique sculpture; from his own standpoint as an artist, he was the equal of the classic scholars; they could learn from him, as he from them; he could share the effort of all to enlighten the present by the past. Therefore, if we turn again to this picture, still surviving on the wall

[13] Selwyn Brinton.

of one of the rooms in the castle of Mantua, where all those people actually lived their proud, high-seeking, dignified, and, at times, terrible lives, we may be able perhaps to see it with truer eyes, and find it extraordinarily fascinating. We shall understand that it was with deliberation that Mantegna made the figures of the marquis and his sons particularly immobile, their draperies notably stiff. By thus emphasizing the resemblance of this portion of his picture to antique low-relief sculpture, he singled out these figures from the others for particular honor. That the whole group stretches across the composition with a general resemblance to an ancient bas-relief, is a tribute to the classic ideals which he and all those people worshiped. But that he was also a student of nature may be seen in the fine perspective of the landscape. A still finer example of perspective adorns the ceiling of this same room, which he decorated in such a way that one seems to be looking up at the sky through a circular opening, as we may see it actually through the eye of the Pantheon's dome. Around the circle is a balustrade, upon which stand a peacock and a basket of fruit; and leaning upon it are a girl with jeweled head-dress and a negress, who look down with laughing faces, while a band of winged boys play on the edge of the stone-work. Vasari relates what admiration this excited. Nothing so daring or so scientific had previously been accomplished in Italy.

The work, however, which seems to have pleased Mantegna himself best was his series of panels, painted on canvas, in all eighty feet long, representing the *Triumph of Ceasar*. Into this long procession he crowded the fruits of the study he most loved — as Vasari says:

> the perfumes, the Incense-bearers, the priests, the oxen crowned for sacrifice, the prisoners, the booty seized by the soldiers, the well-ordered squadrons, the elephants, the spoils of art, the victories, cities, and fortresses imitated on different cars, together with an infinitude of trophies, helmets, corselets, and arms of all kinds borne aloft on spears, with ornaments, vases, and rich vessels innumerable.

Of these paintings, marvelous exhibitions of knowledge, invention, and skill, Mantegna, who was most self-exacting and severe in

the judgment of himself, said: "I really was not ashamed of having painted them." In 1628, two years before the sack of Mantua by the Austrians, they were sold to Charles I of England, and now are in Hampton Court Palace, irreparably damaged by "restoration." Fortunately they can still be studied in the magnificent series of wood-engravings made from them by Andrea Andreani at the close of the sixteenth century. Of portions also of the *Triumph* Mantegna himself made engravings upon copper.

For this profound student of the antique, of nature, and of the scientific principles of drawing and painting, found time, in the midst of his work with the brush and pencil, to execute many engravings, among the most famous of which are an *Entombment of Christ* and a *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*. The prints of his engravings, traveling broadcast through Europe as well as Italy, helped to teach others and to draw many students to Mantua to build up their own knowledge by study of the great master's paintings.

I wish it were possible to illustrate here the two engravings mentioned above, for they throw a strong light upon Mantegna's genius. They prove, on the one hand his extraordinary intensity of feeling, on the other his extraordinarily dispassionate self-control, and also his power over line to make it express emotion. In the *Entombment* the lifeless, expressionless body of the Saviour is surrounded with dramatic energy: the bearers straining on the burden, the mourners weeping or tossing their hands in anguish, the Virgin in collapse, St. John standing erect with clenched hands and open mouth, shrieking iii utter horror that such a thing should be! It is the work of a man whose imagination has been filled with the terribleness of suffering. Yet, when he draws Judith, he represents her as a beautiful Vestal virgin, a visionary, like Joan of Arc, dreamily and daintily passing her hand over the head of the murdered general who would have enslaved her nation. No sight of blood, nothing of sensationalism; he himself betrays no feeling, looks at the matter quite objectively, sees only in the horror of the situation a chance for most exquisite beauty of expressional line.

Could you compare it with our present picture, it would help you to understand that the severity of the latter was deliberate. Yet, even without the comparison, a study of the accompanying illustration will

reveal how the intentional severity of the upright lines of figures, tree, and column has been counteracted and assuaged by the curving line, like a loop of links, formed by the tender figures in the group, the young ecclesiastic and the little children; and, further, by the diagonal lines of the beautiful landscape.

The stern old Paduan expressed the intense energy of his age, tempered only occasionally with the softer sense of beauty.

CHAPTER 4
Fra Angelico / Jan Van Eyck

1387-1455 (?) – 1440(?)

Italian School of Florence / Flemish School of Bruges

Before proceeding along the path which Masaccio and Mantegna have struck out, we must pause to consider a painter who, although a contemporary of theirs, belongs more to the past. He was the last inheritor of the Giottesque tradition, and the last of the painters whose work is thoroughly religious.

I invite you to turn aside into a little quiet garden, as it were, secluded within cloister walls, where Fra Angelico, painter and monk, a brother of the black-and-white order of the Dominicans, devoted his life to religious paintings. Choosing, as an example of his work, *The Annunciation*, I have placed it in comparison with *The Virgin and Donor* by Jan van Eyck, who shares with his brother Hubert the honor of founding the Flemish School.

One reason for this comparison is that we are trying to gain a bird's-eye view of the story of painting; not allowing ourselves to become absorbed in any one spot to the exclusion of others, but scanning the whole field and noting the great movements as they spring up, now here, now there, sometimes related to one another, sometimes separate, but all of them features in the general progress of European civilization. Surely it is interesting to realize that at the commencement of this fifteenth century, when Italy was waking up to its second and greatest activity, the Flemish also were waking up to art, the first among the Northern nations. Again, I have selected this comparison, because it was religious subjects that chiefly occupied the Flemish painters, and Fra Angelico is the most remarkable example in Italian art of a religious painter of religious subjects. Moreover, he worked in a beautiful seclusion, and secluded also was the art of Flanders, a choice garden in the northern wilderness. It was an art, too, of minute perfection of finish, and such was Fra Angelico's.

There is in both these pictures a minute finish of detail which

suggests — what is indeed the case — that each artist owed something to the miniature-painters who decorated with tiny scenes the pages of the manuscripts. But in Fra Angelico's there is a greater simplicity and, as the artists call it, a greater breadth of style; for this picture was executed when he was about fifty years old; by which time he had been painting for thirty years and had come, as we shall see, under many influences that did not reach the Flemish artist.

So let us begin by studying the latter's picture. It was painted for presentation to a church, and the portrait of the donor, the Canon Roslin, was introduced. This was a common practice in the Renaissance days. The picture was intended to serve the double purpose of being "to the glory of God and in memory of the donor." Clad in a dark robe brocaded with flower-forms of a bronze hue that catch the light, now richly, now delicately, like the body and wings of a May-bug, the canon is kneeling in an attitude of prayer, but gazes upon the Virgin with a piercing look of scrutiny. In this strong face we feel sure that the artist has painted an extraordinarily faithful portrait; and from the fact that the expression of the face does not correspond with the humble and devout gesture of the hands, we learn that although Van Eyck painted religious pictures, he was not a religious painter in the way that Fra Angelico was.

Note also the greater elaboration of Van Eyck's picture. After he had secured a dignified composition, in which the principal figures should count as large and handsome spots and the background be broken up by contrast into a more complicated fretwork of decoration, he then set himself to carry each separate part to the finest possible degree of accurate and perfect workmanship. Here appears the Flemish spirit, with its patient, tireless pursuit of minute beauty, such as produced a nation of craftsmen, skilled in illumination, in miniature painting, in jewelry and the working of gold and silver, in embroidery and the making of tapestries and stained-glass windows. But Jan van Eyck and his elder brother Hubert, although they had this love of minute perfection, had also large ideas, and never allowed the little details to detract from the grand general significance of the whole work.

We may examine, for example, the figure of the Christ; it is painted with the precise daintiness of a miniature and is very baby-

like, yet it has also remarkable character, an air of seriousness, as if it were conscious of being more than its little form would indicate. The Virgin's robe is crimson; her face is not beautiful, being of the heavy, wholesome, practical type of the women of the country; but she has a wealth of golden hair, painted with wonderful realism, and over it a little angel holds a golden crown of exquisite workmanship decorated with pearls. Or you may study with interest the patterning of the marble floor; the elegant arcade of arches and columns, with the glimpse of a leaded window on each side; or the little garden beyond, where lilies are growing in the borders, magpies strut on the paths, peacocks sun themselves upon the balustrades, and two little boys are looking out over the distant landscape. Here is a far-stretching scene in miniature: level country, characteristically Flemish, threaded by a river over which is a bridge connecting the town on the one bank with that on the other. People are passing over the bridge, or crossing the water in boats, or walking the streets, with an appearance of reality, although their stature is almost microscopic. Indeed, there is a great deal in the picture that it is impossible to discover in the black-and-white reproduction, which also gives little idea of the textures — that is to say, of the rendering of the different surfaces of marble, fabric, flesh, or metal and the rest, each according to its special quality — and none of the rich, full, firm coloring, brilliant as agate or precious stones.

This wonderful color is another reason of the fame of the Van Eycks. Artists came from Italy to study their pictures, to discover what they themselves must do in order to paint so well, with such brilliance, such full and firm effect, as these two brothers. For the latter had found out the secret of working successfully with oil-colors. Before their day attempts had been made to mix colors in the medium of oil, but the oil was slow in drying, and the varnish added to remedy this had blackened the colors. The Van Eycks, however, had hit upon a transparent varnish which dried quickly and without injury to the tints. Though they guarded the secret jealously, it was discovered by the Italian Antonello da Messina, who was working in Bruges, and by him published to the world. The invention made possible the enormous development in the art of painting which ensued.

Little is known of the two brothers; even the dates of their birth

being uncertain. Their most famous work, begun by Hubert and finished by Jan, is the altarpiece. *The Adoration of the Lamb,* Jan, as perhaps also Hubert, was for a time in the service of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. He was entered in the household as "varlet and painter"; but acted at the same time as confidential friend, and for his services received an annual salary of one hundred livres (almost twenty-five dollars), two horses for his use, and a "varlet in livery" to attend on him. The greater part of his life was spent in Bruges.

In these two brothers the grand art of Flanders was born in a day. Like "the sudden flowering of the aloe, after sleeping through a century of suns," this art, rooted in the native soil, nurtured by the smaller arts of craftsmanship, reached its full ripeness, and expanded into blossom. Such further development as it experienced, we shall find, came from Italian influence; but the distinctly Flemish art, born out of local conditions in Flanders, was already full grown. The great French painter and critic, Fromentin, says of it: "Imagine a collection of the creations of the goldsmiths, executed in paint, in which one feels the handiwork of the enameler, the glass-worker, the graver, and the illuminator. Its sentiment is grave, for it is inspired by the sentiment of the monasteries; but it is under the patronage of princes, and its general character is resplendent."

And now let us turn back to Fra Angelico. Little is known of his early life except that he was born at Vicchio, in the broad fertile valley of the Mugello, not far from Florence, that his name was Guido, and that he passed his youth in Florence, probably in some *bottegha*, for at twenty he was recognized as a painter. But he had already come under the influence of the great preacher and scholar, Giovanni Dominici, who traveled up and down the length and breadth of Italy, exhorting all men to a holier life and founding the order of Dominican monks. At the door of their convent on the slopes of Fiesole, just above Florence, Guido and his brother Benedetto, an illuminator, sought admittance. They were welcomed by the monks, and, after a year's novitiate, admitted to the brotherhood, Guido taking the name by which he was known in after life, Fra Giovanni da Fiesole; for the title of "Angelico," the "Angel," or "Il Beato," "The Blessed," was conferred on him after his death.

Henceforth he became an example of two personalities in one





Top: The Annunciation, Fra Angelico
Bottom: Virgin and Donor, Jan Van Eyck

man: he was all in all a painter, all in all a devout monk; his subjects were ever religious ones and represented in a deeply religious spirit, yet his devotion as a monk was no greater than his absorption as an artist. Consequently, though his life was secluded within the walls of the monastery, he kept in touch with the art movements of his time and continually developed as a painter. His early work shows that he had learned of the illuminators who inherited the Byzantine traditions, and had been affected by the simple religious feeling of Giotto's work. Then he began to learn of that brilliant band of sculptors and architects who were enriching Florence by their genius. Ghiberti was executing his pictures in bronze upon the doors of the Baptistery; Donatello, his famous statue of *St. George* and the dancing children around the organ-gallery in the Cathedral; and Luca della Robbia also was at work upon his frieze of children, singing, dancing, and playing upon instruments. Moreover, Masaccio had revealed the dignity of form in painting. Through these artists the beauty of the human form and of its life and movement was being manifested to the Florentines and to the other cities, whither their fame spread.

Among the rest, Angelico catches the enthusiasm and gives increasing reality of life and movement to his figures. Furthermore, from the convent garden he could see the marvelous dome, designed by Brunelleschi, steadily rising above the Cathedral. What wonder that his imagination was fired and that he became, like other cultivated men of the day, an earnest student of architecture! At length, in the summer of 1435, the brethren moved into Florence and took up their abode in the monastery of San Marco. The original house was being added to, at the expense of Duke Cosimo de' Medici, by his favorite architect, Michelozzo. Can you not imagine with what joy Angelico must have watched the work, moved alike by the devout pride of a brother in his order and by an artist's sympathy with beauty? For he was to decorate the refectory and the corridors and cells; and close indeed must have been the bond between the painter and the architect.

If you turn again to the *Annunciation* that he painted later on the wall of the upper corridor, you will see how large a part the architecture plays in the composition of the picture.

The arcaded loggia is clearly inspired by the one down-stairs in

the courtyard, and the two Ionic columns are careful copies of those which Michelozzo had just completed. Moreover, the vaulted ceilings, the round arch and slender columns with an adaptation of the Corinthian capital, are all characteristic of the elegant dignity of the arcades which this architect and Brunelleschi were introducing into the interior courts of their buildings, while leaving the outside grave and often stern and massive, like a fortress.

And from this we may glean two points of interest: first, how the different kinds of artists of this period learned from one another, working together in a newly awakened enthusiasm for beauty; and, secondly, that Angelico himself, by contact with these outside influences, had broadened and strengthened his own style. He was now about fifty years old, and this picture, representing his maturity, is far in advance of the earlier ones. They were apt to be crowded with figures and decorative details. This one is so open and spacious, freely letting in the quiet warmth of the twilight; and so simple in general plan and therefore decorative in a big way. Instead of a multiplicity of objects counteracting the effect of one another, a few leading features are enforced by repetition: the curved lines of the arches and ceilings, for example, and the upright ones of the columns and fence. And, in addition to the interlaced pattern formed by the contrast of these two sorts of lines, there is the massed contrast of the garden, interspersed as it is with little features, and of the broad, plain surfaces of the masonry, enlivened only by a few choicely selected details.

How this arrangement of beautiful simplicity, so elevated in its general design, so tender in its parts, accords with the character of the two figures and with the scene they are enacting! In the cool of the evening Mary has been surprised by God's messenger, Gabriel. He has but this moment alighted; his wings still glisten with the iridescence of the sky, and his body thrills yet with the rapidity of his flight, as he drops on one knee with bowed head and folded hands in adoration of her who is to be the mother of the Saviour. And at this apparition, flashing so suddenly across the quiet tenor of her days, Mary's face is troubled; but, as she harkens to the divine message, she too bows her head and folds her arms in adoration and in meek acceptance. "And Mary said. Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

Fitly corresponding to the sentiment of the occasion is the tender purity of the color-scheme. The angel's robe is pale rose-color edged with gold; Madonna's robe is a paler pink, and her mantle deep blue; while, beyond the whiteness of the architecture, the grass is starred with daisies, and above the fence peep clusters of roses backed by dark-green cypresses.

And fitly corresponding too is the habitation of the picture. You pass out of the traffic of the streets into the quiet retreat of Michelozzo's court, some afternoon, perhaps, when the sloping sun plays lovingly over a few of the arches and columns, while the rest are drowsing in various gradations of shadow. A door in the cloisters leads into the chapter-house, adorned with Fra Angelico's Crucifixion; a second opens into the refectory, where the brethren took their meals in presence of another of their brother's pictures; and when you have mounted the stairs you pass along the corridor, out of which open the little private cells, where the black-and-white-habited monks worked and slept and meditated: in one of them Fra Bartolomeo — after Angelico's time, but, like him, a painter — and in another Savonarola, a later prior of the order, who stirred Florence to the depths by his denunciations of sin, and was hanged by his enemies, his body being burned and its ashes thrown into the Arno. You pass along beside the cells, each with its little window and its sacred painting on the wall done by Angelico, until at the end of the corridor you come face to face with this Annunciation.

Stilled is the busy life of the place, the monks are gone, their habitation now a show-place trod by the steps of visitors from all parts of the world. But the spirit of peace and piety still haunts the spot and finds its sweetest expression in this picture.

Compared with it, Van Eyck's *The Virgin and Donor* is mundane, of the world, worldly; it is the work of a great painter luxuriating in the opportunities which the sacred subject offered. Fra Angelico was no less ardent a painter, but his painting was saturated with' the feeling also of devout religion. In the complete union of the artist and the devotee he stands alone in the history of painting. His gentle art and life represent, as I have said, a quiet back-water, secluded from the river of achievement that was gathering force and about to plunge on in full might through the fifteenth century.

CHAPTER 5
Alessandro Botticelli / Hans Memling

1446-1510 1425(?)-1495(?)

Italian School of Florence / Flemish School of Bruges

We have seen that the revival of painting began with the study of the appearances of objects and an attempt to represent them as real to the senses of sight and touch; that the painters learned from the sculptors, who themselves had learned from the remains of antique sculpture; and that the result was a closer truth to nature, in the representation both of the human form and of its movement. We have also seen how in Flanders Jan van Eyck developed a grand school of painting out of the national skill of craftsmanship in the minor arts of decoration — goldsmith's work, stained glass, embroidery, tapestry, and the like — and that to the truth of natural form he added also a true appearance of textures. Further, we have seen how in Fra Angelico appeared the most perfect flower of that old religious feeling which for centuries had been a light in the darkness of the world.

We have now to consider the effect produced upon painting by the revival of the study of Greek, which revealed to Italy of the fifteenth century a new light, in the joy of which the older light was dimmed. Botticelli typifies this new inspiration. I have coupled with him the Flemish painter Memling, in order to continue our study of the Flemish School, and also because both these artists, though their worked apart and under very different conditions, had one quality in common. A certain *naivete* of mind appears in each, an unaffected simplicity, frank and artless, fresh and tender like the child-mind or the opening buds of spring flowers. In Memling's case it is tinctured with gentle sentiment; in that of Botticelli, with a wistful yearning toward the light of old Hellas which was just beginning to dawn on the world of his time.

If you visit the Campo Santo at Pisa, you will see some frescoes which were painted in the fourteenth century, perhaps by Orcagna,

or, as others think, by the brothers Lorenzetti. Their subjects are, *The Triumph of Death, The Judgment,* and *Hell*. They are terrible in their tragic intensity. A party of ladies and knights are going a-hawking; but their horses start back, sniffing at three open coffins in which half-decayed corpses are lying. For one of those awful plagues which periodically devastated Europe is stalking through the land. In another part of the picture appears a throng of youths and maidens dancing in a rose-garden, whom Death is mowing down with a scythe; elsewhere wretched creatures, mutilated by torture, are imploring Death in vain to ease them of their anguish; good and evil spirits struggle for the souls of men; and apart from these grisly horrors are hermits, living their lives of abnegation with the birds and beasts among the rocks.

These frescoes depict with horrible directness the dark turmoil of soul and body in the middle ages; the cruelty of man to man; the ever-present dread specter of death; the judgment of God, inexorable, inevitable; the solitude of the monkish life, as the only refuge from a sinful and doomed world; lurid fire, and blackness hanging like a thick pall above it, and no escape except in the renunciation of the world and of the joy of living.

But a glimmer of light was trembling on the horizon. The possibility of beauty in the living of this life was beginning to swallow up the horror of death; the soul of man, so long pent up and imprisoned in savage darkness, had been suddenly liberated; for what is called "The New Learning" had unlocked the dungeons of thought.

The newness consisted in two things: first, that the learning concerned itself with new subjects; secondly, that the knowledge of Greek was recovered by the western world.

Dante's poems were the swan-song of the middle ages. Seventeen years before his death, Petrarch was born; nine years later Boccaccio; and the poetry of both and the stories of the latter are the evangel of the modern world. Instead of speculating on the mysteries that lie beyond the grave, their theme is the present life and living humanity.

Moreover, both of them were inflamed with a longing to know all that was to be known of the older classic authors of Italy, and of the Greek classics upon which the Roman were founded. They ransacked Italy for manuscripts, and procured from a certain Leontius Pilatus, a

native of Greece, a rude translation of Homer into Latin; for with the Greek tongue itself they had no acquaintance.

The introduction of this into Italian culture dates from 1396, when Manuel Chrysoloras, a Byzantine scholar, was appointed professor of Greek at Florence. From him and from his pupils the knowledge of Greek literature spread rapidly over Italy, accompanied by an extraordinary enthusiasm for the antique: for Roman and Greek art, and for Greek thought and Greek ideals. Hence the artist's devotion to the beauty of the human form, the scholar's admiration of Plato's philosophy. Artists and scholars thronged the court of Duke Lorenzo de' Medici — Lorenzo the Magnificent, patron of arts and letters; and among the brilliant throng none was more highly honored than Sandro Botticelli.

He was the son of a citizen in comfortable circumstances, and had been "instructed in all such things as children are usually taught before they choose a calling." But he refused to give his attention to reading, writing, and accounts, continues Vasari, so that his father, despairing of his ever becoming a scholar, apprenticed him to the goldsmith Botticello: whence the name by which the world remembers him. In those days, as we have noted before, men were masters of more than one craft. Among Sandro's contemporaries, for instance, Pollajuolo was painter as well as goldsmith, and Verrocchio goldsmith, painter, and sculptor. Botticello's Sandro, a stubborn-featured youth with large, quietly searching eves and a shock of yellow hair — he has left a portrait of himself on the right-hand side of his picture of the *Adoration of the Magi* — would also fain become a painter, and to that end was placed with the Carmelite monk Fra Lippo Lippi.

Read for yourself Browning's poem "Fra Lippo Lippi," and discover the friar's discontent at being obliged to represent religious subjects according to the conventions prescribed by his patron, the church. For he was a realist, as the artists of his day had become, satisfied with the joy and skill of painting, and with the actual study of the beauty and character of the human subject. Sandro made rapid progress, loved his master, and later on extended his love to his master's son, Filippino Lippi, and taught him to paint. But the master's realism scarcely touched him, for Sandro was a dreamer and a poet.

You will feel this, if you refer to the two pictures and compare his *Madonna Enthroned* with Memling's. The latter's is much more realistic. It is true that it does not, as a whole, represent a real scene, for the Virgin's throne with its embroidered hanging or dossal, the canopy or baldachin above it, and the richly decorated arch which frames it in, are not what you would expect to see set up in a landscape. These are the conventional features, repeated with variations in so many Madonna pictures intended for altarpieces. But how very real are the two peeps of landscape, drawn, we may feel sure, from nature: a great man's castle and a water-mill, two widely separated phases of life, suggesting, perhaps, that the Christ came to save rich and poor alike. This would be a touch of symbolism; another may appear in the introduction of the apple, intended to remind us of the circumstances of the fall of man, which the Saviour came into the world to redress. But Memling was satisfied merely to suggest the symbolism; and then devoted himself to rendering with characteristic *naivete* a little scene of realism. The angel on the left is simply an older child, playfully attracting the baby's attention with an apple; the Christ is simply a baby attracted by the colored, shining object; and the pretty scene is watched intently by the other angel. On the Madonna's face, however, is an abstracted expression, as if her thoughts were far away; and indeed they are, yet not in pursuit of any mystical dream, but following that quiet, happy pathway along which a young mother's thoughts will roam. She is, in fact, only a girl-mother whom the artist has surprised, while she sits, unconscious of everything around her, wrapped up in the inward peace and joy of motherhood.

So we find in Memling's picture, despite the religious conception of its arrangement, a preoccupation with the natural appearances of persons and things, a close study of the way in which facts present themselves to the eye. This is apparent equally in the landscape, in the carved and embroidered ornament, in the character of the figures, and in the little story which they are enacting. As I have said, the spirit of the picture is realistic.

But turn to Botticelli's. Here the spirit is allegorical. He was fond of allegorical subjects, especially of mythological ones treated in a vein of allegory. His *Birth of Venus* and *Allegory of Spring* are the most





Top: Madonna Enthroned, Alessandro Botticelli
Bottom: Virgin Enthroned, Hans Memling

famous examples. In the present case the subject is religious, but we may doubt if the Bible version of the story was in the artist's mind. He was commissioned to paint a Madonna and Child with attendant angels, and, poet and dreamer that he was, took the familiar theme and made it the framework of an imagery of his own. This imagery, it may be fairly safe to believe, had less to do with the old Gospel story than with the later gospel of the New Learning. In the figure of the Child- Christ there is a grave dignity, an assertion of authority; and not improbably the artist meant it to be symbolic of the wonderful new birth of classic culture. The only gesture of infancy is in the left arm and in the hand groping for the mother's breast. And she has the same kind of face, bowed in timid meekness, very sad in expression, which Botticelli gave to his *Venus*. Mother of love, mother of God, — he blends the Christian and the pagan worship to represent the mother of the "Desire of all nations." The cult of the Virgin, partly at least, had grown out of the ancient cult of Venus; and Botticelli, working in an age that was looking back to the classic past and trying to adjust the present to it, felt in *Madonna* and in *Venus* the twin expressions of a single sentiment — worship of the highest beauty in the person of woman. But beauty of face, as some may think, he does not give to his queen of love; she is meek and timid, as I have said, oppressed with gentle sadness; too frail as yet for a world still full of violence and confusion; sadly conscious that she is not yet at home in her new habitation. And in the faces of the angels also, the young, fair creatures that stand around the throne, there is a similar expression of wistful and unsatisfied yearning. It was so that Botticelli's own spirit peered through the still lingering darkness of the medieval times toward that light from Hellas which was beginning to dawn, but of which he himself never expected to see the noonday. Hence the strain of sadness in all his pictures; they have the note of infinite but ineffectual desire. So, when we understand this, we forget the homeliness of many of his faces, and find in them a spiritual significance which, we learn to feel, is a very touching and beautiful expression of the artist's own mind, of his particular way of looking at the world of his own time.

He looked at it as a poet, moved alike by the love of beauty and by the beauty of love; and out of the world's realities he fashioned

himself dreams, and these he pictured. So his pictures, as I have said, are not records of fact, treated with a very pleasing fancifulness and reverence, as in this *Madonna* of Memling's; but visions, the beauty of which is rather spiritual than material. He tried, as it were, to paint not only the flower, but also its fragrance; and it was the fragrance that to him seemed the more precious quality.

So now, perhaps, we can begin to understand the difference between his technic — that is to say, his manner of setting down in paint what he desired to express — and Memling's. The latter, serene and happy, had all a child's delight in the appearances of things, attracted by them as the infant in this picture is attracted by the apple, and offering them to us with the same winning grace and certainty that they will please as the angel in the picture exhibits. So it is the facts, obvious to the senses of touch and sight, that he presents, with a loving, tender care to make them as obvious to us as possible, elaborating even the smallest parts. You have examined the beautiful workmanship in the ornamentation of the arch and in the garlands suspended by the charming little baby forms; but have you observed the tiny figures in the landscape? The castle drawbridge is down, and a lady on horseback passes over it, following a gentleman who may be riding forth to hunt, since a greyhound courses along behind him. From the mill is issuing a man with a sack of flour on his shoulders, which he will set upon the back of the donkey that waits patiently before the door; while a little way along the road stands a dog, all alert and impatient to start. These incidents illustrate Memling's fondness for detail and elaboration of finish, and his delight in the representation of facts as facts: traits which were characteristic of this early Flemish School. But observe that these minutely finished distant details illustrate also the *naivete* of Memling. From where he stood to paint the foreground group, the figures in the background would appear sim- ply as little spots of color. He did not paint the facts as they appeared to his eye, but as in his mind he knew them to be — the child's way of drawing.

By comparison with Memling, Botticelli is a painter not of facts, but of ideas; and his pictures are not so much a representation of certain objects as a pattern of forms. Nor is his coloring rich and lifelike, as Memling's: it is subordinated to form, and often rather a

tinting than actual color. In fact, he is interested in the abstract possibilities of his art rather than in the concrete. For example, his compositions, as has just been said, are a pattern of forms; his figures do not actually occupy well-defined places in a well-defined area of space; they do not attract us by their suggestion of bulk, but as shapes of form, suggesting rather a flat pattern of decoration. Accordingly the lines which inclose the figures are chosen with the primary intention of being decorative. You will appreciate this if you will turn to the two pictures and compare the draperies of the angels. Those of Memling are commonplace in their prosy realism, compared with the fluttering grace of Botticelli's. But there is more in this flutter of draperies than mere beauty of line: it expresses a lively and graceful movement. These angels have alighted like birds, their garments still buoyed up with air and agitated by their speed of flight; each body being animated with its individual grace of movement. Compared with the spontaneousness and freedom of these figures, those of Memling seem heavy, stock-still, and posed for effect.

Now, therefore, you are in a position to appreciate the force of the remark that Botticelli, "though one of the worst anatomists, was one of the greatest draughtsmen of the Renaissance." As an example of false anatomy you may notice the impossible way in which the Madonna's head is attached to the neck, and other instances of faulty articulation and of incorrect form of limbs may be found in Botticelli's pictures. Yet he is recognized as one of the greatest draftsmen, because he gave to "line" not only intrinsic beauty but significance; that is to say, in mathematical language, he resolved the movement of the figure into its factors, its simplest forms of expression, and then combined these various forms into a pattern which, by its rhythmical and harmonious lines, produces an effect upon our imagination, corresponding to the sentiments of grave and tender poetry that filled the artist himself.

This power of making every line count both in significance and beauty distinguishes the great master-draftsmen from the vast majority of artists who use line mainly as a necessary means of representing concrete objects. To distinguish it from the latter use we may call it the *abstract* use of line.

Yet, although unique, Botticelli's art was but a link in the gradual

development of Italian painting; whereas Memling's, like the Van Eycks', represented a growth complete in itself. Little is known of Memling's life. It is surmised that he was a German by descent and born in Mavence; but the definite fact of his life is that he painted at Bruges, sharing with the Van Eycks, who had also worked in that city, the honor of being the leading artists of the so-called "School of Bruges." He carried on their method of painting, and added to it a quality of gentle sentiment. In his case, as in theirs, the Flemish art, founded upon local conditions and embodying purely local ideals, reached its fullest expression.

His contemporary, Rogier van der Weyden, who worked in Brussels and was the chief exponent of what is called the "School of Brabant," represented religious subjects with dramatic and emotional intensity; but his color was pale and thin, and his drawing angular and often extravagant in gesture. The sentiment of his pictures is Gothic: a term which sums up in a general way the religious feeling of the Northern races, more gloomy, intense, and painful than the Christianity of the South; producing the solemn, mysterious, intricate grandeur of the Gothic cathedral instead of the simpler, sunnier, and more elegant form of church built in the Romanesque style, which was a mingling of the Roman and the Bvzantine methods of construction.

We shall have to say more about the Gothic feeling when we come to the consideration of the early German painting. Meanwhile the thing to note is that the Van Eycks and Memling, though living in an age that was influenced by this Gothic intensity, worked in an atmosphere of quiet and sunniness, cultivating, as it were, a little garden stocked with the simple flowers native to their country, and bringing it to perfection of development; so that this Flemish painting of the fifteenth century represents a little separate chapter in the history of art. At the beginning of the following century stands out the name of Quentin Massys (1460-1530), but his work has already ceased to be distinctively Flemish, and shows the influence of Italy. For as commercial relations increased between the two countries, the artists of Flanders lost their national characteristics and became imitators, at a very great distance, of the Italian masters. As we are treating in this little book only of the vital periods and phases of art,

the art of Flanders will disappear from our horizon for nearly a hundred years, to reappear in colossal shape, in the person of Rubens, at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Italy's yearning toward the antique, to which Botticelli gave expression, we shall find satisfied in the work of Giovanni Bellini and of Raphael.

CHAPTER 6
Pietro Vannucci (Perugino) / Giovanni Bellini

1446-1524 — Italian School of Umbria

1428(?) – 1516 — Italian School of Venice

At the end of the previous chapter we touched on the Gothic intensity which characterized the art of the North, in the midst of which the Flemish art of the fifteenth century, that culminated in the Van Eycks and Memling, was like an oasis of repose and rich pleasantness. For these artists escaped the rigorous influences around them, chiefly through their pure delight in the actual presentation of objects, which made them first and chiefly painters, and only in a secondary way interpreters of the Christian dogma and religious zeal.

You will remember that a similar painter-like love of presentation distinguished the contemporaries of Botticelli in Florence, and we spoke of them as realists, while Botticelli, as we noticed, was a poet and a dreamer. The two artists who now demand our attention, Perugino and Giovanni Bellini, were also contemporaries of Botticelli; and in them too the painter-like point of view was pronounced, but tempered with — perhaps we should rather say, subordinated to — a very high purpose of sentiment.

They were among the first artists in Italy to perfect the use of the oil medium, the secret of which had been discovered from the Van Eycks and brought into Italy by Antonello da Messina. It permitted a fullness and richness of color and a fusing of all the colors into an atmosphere of golden warmth— qualities that corresponded with the sentiments that each of them desired to express.

Let us try to understand the sentiment which is exhibited in these pictures. Perugino's is different to Bellini's, and yet both have something in common. In each of these two triptychs you will feel the presence of a wonderful calm. It has been said of Perugino that he is the painter "of solitude; of the isolated soul, alone, unaffected by any other, unlinked in any work, or feeling, or suffering with any other

soul — nay, even with any physical thing." You will realize the truth of this, I think, if you study the Pavia altarpiece. Not only in the expression of each face, but also in the gesture and carriage of the body, there is an absolute unconsciousness of surroundings, a complete absorption in some inward spiritual ecstasy. The archangel Michael, the Virgin, and the archangel Raphael, who holds the young Tobit by the hand, are beings without sin or sorrow or even joy; filled with the "peace that passeth understanding," that peace which comes of complete detachment from the world and of rapt communion with God. Nor is the type of the male figures masculine — it is said that Perugino's wife was the model for Raphael. Yet the pose of the Michael is not that of a woman; indeed, it would seem as if the artist's intention was to create a being who should be without thought or suggestion of sex; the embodiment, with as little bodily hindrance as possible, of a soul engaged in the beatitude of contemplation. His figures, then, do not represent Virgin, saints, and angels as such, but as personifications of intense soul-rapture. They are the souls and soul-saturated bodies which Perugino saw around him. For in the dying years of the fifteenth century Italy was torn with factions, a prey to sack and massacre at the hands of licentious bands of soldiers. Perugia itself, the little town on the hills of Umbria, where Perugino worked, was governed by treacherous and ferocious captains; its dark and precipitous streets were filled with broil and bloodshed, and its palaces with evil living. Yet it was one of the most pious cities in all Italy. Men and women sought refuge from the horrors of actual life in strange spiritual solitude, in life removed from all activities, steeped in devotion, passively contemplating a far-off ideal of purity and loveliness.

This was a very different thing from the active religious feeling of Fra Angelico: simple and childlike in its sunny faith; a product, as it were, of the open daylight; the lovable expression of a man who, as we have seen, entered humbly and intelligently into the activities around him. Yet Perugino's art, like Fra Angelico's, had its roots in the old Byzantine tradition of painting. You remember that the latter had departed farther and farther from any actual representation of the human form, until it became merely a symbol of religious ideas. Perugino, working under the influence of his time, restored body and

substance to the figures, but still made them, as of old, primarily the symbols of an ideal. In him the Byzantine inspiration, so far as it was an expression of religion, reached its highest point of development.

It also reached a final development in Giovanni Bellini, though in another direction. This artist was the son of Jacopo Bellini, a Venetian painter, who, however, was settled in Padua during the time that Giovanni and his elder brother. Gentile, were in the period of studentship. Here, as we have seen, they came under the influence of Mantegna, who was also bound to them by the ties of relationship, since he married their sister. To his brother-in-law Bellini owed much of his knowledge of classical architecture and perspective, and his broad and sculptural treatment of draperies. Moreover, during these years Verrocchio was working on his equestrian statue of *Bartolommeo Colleoni,* "the most magnificent equestrian statue of all time";[14] and Giovanni's father had been a pupil of Mantegna's master, Squarcione, with opportunities of studying the remains of antique sculpture that he had collected. So sculpture and the love of the antique played a large part in Giovanni's early impressions, and left their mark in the stately dignity of his later style. This developed slowly; indeed, during his long life of eighty-eight years he was continually developing; and the masterpiece, reproduced here, was executed when he was about sixty years old and Titian was one of his pupils.

The calm which pervades this picture is of a different kind from that which appears in Perugino's. Its suggestion is of stateliness, of the nobility of grand types of humanity. These figures have the ample quietude of strength in repose that belongs to those of Phidias upon the pediments of the Parthenon. Bellini, of course, knew nothing of these; but his study of such antique sculpture as had come within his observation, influenced by his own particular bent of mind, led him to a point of view very similar to that of the great Athenian. The latter's purpose had been to represent, not individuals, but types of humanity, ideally perfect, god-like beings, whose mental and physical powers were in complete poise. Hence his work is distinguished by grandeur of mass rather than by finish of detail. The successors of

[14] Dr. Bode

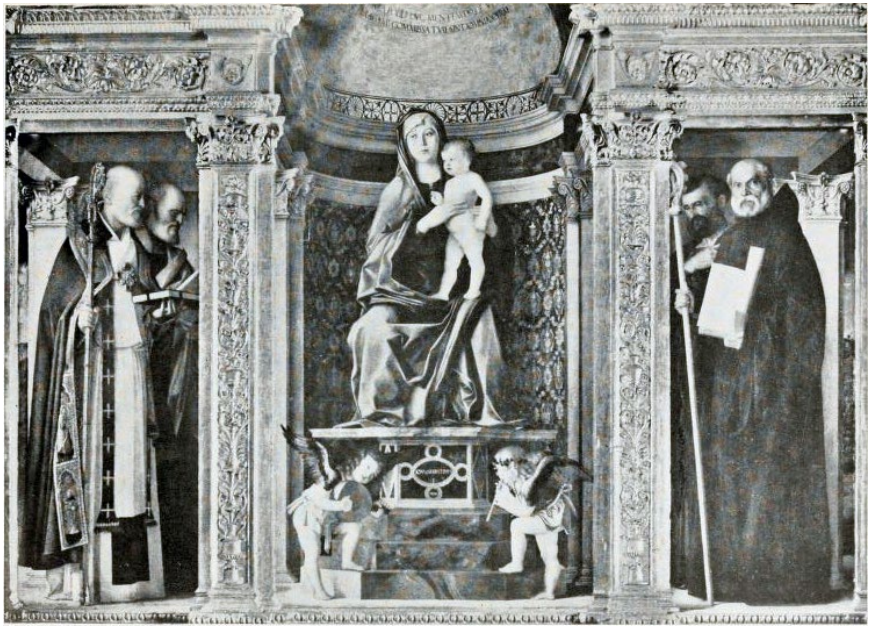
Phidias, on the other hand, showed an increasing tendency to individualize their figures by making them expressive of sentiment and emotion. A similar difference distinguishes Bellini from his successors in the Venetian School.

He is ranked as the greatest of the Venetian School of the fifteenth century — nay, more than that, as the greatest painter of the period — by no less an authority than Dürer, who, during his visit to Venice in 1494, wrote to a friend in a letter still preserved: "He is very old, but yet the best in painting." It must be remembered that at this date Titian was in his prime; so we may well ask upon what Dürer based his judgment. He knew his art theoretically and practically, so that he was able to appreciate the perfect mastery over the brush that was displayed alike by Titian and by Bellini; and, if he preferred the latter, it must have been because he himself was a very intellectual man and accordingly was in sympathy with the grave and elevated conceptions of Bellini rather than with the more sensuous and emotional art of Titian.

For this is the distinction between the two great Venetians. Bellini worked in a great calm, removed from passion. Swayed by intellectuality, serene and lofty and a little severe, he stands to the glowing, eager spirits that followed him as Phidias to Scopas and Praxiteles. In one respect, however, he shows the influence of his time. Observe the noble character in the heads of the four saints. He lived in an age when the portrayal of character was an important aim of art, and was himself a great portrait-painter — witness his noble portrait of Doge *Leonardo Loredano* in the National Gallery. During his long life he saw no fewer than eleven doges, and was state painter during the reigns of four.

To return to our picture. These bishops and monks have the bronzed, sunburned faces that may still be seen among the boatmen of Venice; the Virgin's complexion has the pure carnation tones of girls reared in a moist atmosphere; the cherubs, with their naked legs, recall the children that may still be seen fishing for crabs at sunset. In fact, the picture, as the French critic Taine remarked, "is full of local truth, and yet the apparition is one of a superior and august world. These personages do not move; their faces are in repose, and their eyes fixed like those of figures seen in a dream."





Top: Triptych from the Pavia Altarpiece, Perugino
Bottom: Triptych Altarpiece, Giovanni Bellini

Here again is the symbol of an idea, as in the Byzantine paintings; but this time the symbol itself is founded on truth to actual local facts, and the idea is the elevation of these well-known facts into a lofty and ennobling type. It is not, as in Perugino's work, an escape from human nature into the abstract seclusion of the soul, but an assertion of the grandeur that may be inherent in humanity itself. Thus in Bellini's pictures the influence of the new learning of Greek culture and Platonic philosophy, toward which Botticelli groped tentatively, is seen in its highest and purest form.

And now let us try to discover something of the technical means by which Perugino and Bellini have expressed in these pictures their ideals. In one we have a notable example of Perugino's skill in combining figures with landscape; in the other, a hint of the dignity given to a composition by the introduction of architectural forms.

It was not until the seventeenth century that artists began to paint landscape for its own sake. By the Italians of the Renaissance it was treated as a background for figures; and while many artists — Perugino, for example, and the Venetians — made a close study of nature, they always kept inanimate nature subordinated to the human subject. The landscape in Perugino's triptych is a representation of Umbrian scenery, a beautiful vista of hills and river-threaded plain, stretching away to a low, distant horizon, with the delicate foliage of slender trees sprayed against the melting tenderness of the sky. To this beautiful effect of receding distance and of open sky, in the representation of which Perugino excelled, is largely due the impression that the picture produces. Just as the expression of the faces tells us that the thoughts of these beings are far away from the actual present, absorbed into infinite contemplation, so our gaze wanders on and on through the landscape, and finally loses itself in the luminous infinitude of the sky. The landscape, in fact, puts our own minds in tune with those of the persons in the picture. If it were not there; if, for example, the background were of gold, as in the old Byzantine pictures, I suspect that we should find these figures excessively sentimental; as, indeed, many of Perugino's pictures are, for it is only occasionally that he rises to the spirituality of this one. But, as it is, the sentiment of the figures is enlarged upon and interpreted by the setting, just as in a Greek play the emotions of the actors are

explained by the chorus.

However, it is not only in interpreting such sentiment as Perugino seeks to express that this union of landscape and figures counts so much. One of the secrets of noble composition is the balancing of what artists call the full and empty spaces. A composition crowded with figures is apt to produce a sensation of stuffiness and fatigue; whereas the combination of a few figures with ample open spaces gives one a sense of exhilaration and repose. You may think there is a contradiction in the idea of being at the same time rested and exhilarated, unless you know the sensation of mountain-walking, when the zest of the upper air fills you with desire to exert yourself, and yet there is no fatigue in exertion; while the broad sweeps of the sky above you and of plain and valley below open lungs and imagination equally, and you feel full of peace and, simultaneously, of eagerness. And this illustration is not far-fetched, since it is a fact that a picture reaches our imagination through our ordinary experience of physical sensation. We know, for example, how soft and warm and caressing is the skin of a little child; and if, in the picture of a child, the flesh is painted in such a way as to suggest this lovely texture, it will stimulate our imagination with pleasure. And it is in the degree that an artist stimulates our imagination through our physical experiences, that he seizes and holds our interest.

I have spoken of the effect produced by a combination of full and empty spaces, but this may be nothing more than a fine pattern. When, however, besides giving us a pattern of flat ornament in two dimensions, the artist can make us realize the third dimension of nature — distance — he so much the more kindles our imagination. For how many of us, as children, have looked at that hill which bounded the horizon of our home and longed to know what lay beyond it? And, in after years, the sight of the ocean, or of peak ranged beyond peak in the mountains, or of a summer sky at night, or of many other distant prospects, allures our imagination to travel on and on and lose itself in space. Now the mere suggestion of distance in a picture, secured by accurate perspective, will not affect us in this way; the artist himself must have this sort of ranging imagination, and then he will not only make you feel the distance, but the existence of every successive plane of intervening space, inviting your

own imagination to range. Perugino preeminently had this feeling and the gift of expressing it: a mastery of what has been called by Mr. Bernard Berenson the art of "space-composition." There are many other technical points in the pictures that we might dwell on; but as our purpose in this little book is to proceed step by step, one thing at a time, we will limit our consideration to this one point — the more so as some of the others will be met with later in the work of Perugino's most illustrious pupil, Raphael.

So, too, in the case of Bellini we will consider only a single technical point — the value of architectural accessories in adding dignity to the composition. These three panels are inclosed in a gilt frame which itself is a very handsome example of Renaissance design and craftsmanship. You will observe that the character of the design is architectural, and that the pilasters, the cornice, and the arch repeat, and therefore enforce, the architectural features of the picture. The general effect of this architectural setting is a mingling of force and grave distinction and of richness.

If you carefully compare this triptych with Perugino's, you will get an insight into the different effects produced, according as the background is landscape or architecture. In the former the lines are irregular, softly undulating, and distance melts into further distance; in Bellini's picture, however, the lines are firm and exact, the background has structural weight and stability. In one case the imagination spreads and finally loses itself in conjecture; in the other it is contracted and concentrated. Perugino's conception is very wooing; Bellini's, more monumentally impressive.

Let us pause for a moment on this word "monumental," since it expresses a quality which will constantly confront us in our study of art. In one sense it is the antithesis of nature: it belongs to a structure reared by the hand of man. Instead of being the result of natural laws working invisibly and over great periods of time, it is the result of formal laws invented by man (sometimes, perhaps, through a hint from nature) and compressed into a well-defined compass. A structure must necessarily be smaller than nature, yet it may impress us with a greater sense of dignity and grandeur. Nature's grandeur, as seen, for example, among the peaks and canyons of the mountains, fills us with awe; we are in the presence of stupendous forces

uncontrolled by visible laws. Whereas a great building, as St. Peter's, for example, is a triumph of law over disorder; everything has been planned, calculated, regulated; in the presence of it man is not crushed down into awed insignificance, but, realizing that all this grandeur around him is the work of man's hand and brain, he is lifted up into glorious enthusiasm, filled with pride in the grandeur of humanity and in the consciousness of having a share in it. A building which can impress us in this way we call monumental. It is worth while to look a little more closely and discover by what means this impression is produced.

Architecture is the most original of the fine arts, not being an imitation of nature, as painting and sculpture are, but an invention of man's own, founded first of all upon necessity, and then made to contribute to the aspirations that filled his soul. Yet its principles are based upon qualities which man learned to admire in nature: stability, for example, height, and breadth, and spaciousness. The prophet Habakkuk, wishing to bring home to man the awful power of God, says that in his presence "the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow." He knew that it was the stability, the permanence of the mountains and hills which impressed his hearers. Again, man in all ages has lifted his eyes from the earth to the height and immensity of the sky; he piled stone on stone to reach this majesty of height, and spanned his columns with arches, and then assembled his arches into the mimic wonder of a dome. Trees taught him the aspiring grandeur of vertical lines; the level horizon, the quiet dignity of the horizontal; distance and space, the beauty of long vistas and of spaciousness. After much experimenting he discovered the proportion of height and breadth and length that would best produce a harmonious whole, and then added ornament which should enrich without impairing the structural dignity and stability of the mass.

Learning from architecture, the sculptors — who, as you remember, in early times were quite frequently architects as well — applied these principles, and sometimes so successfully that their compositions are monumental. Upon these principles also the painter based his compositions; but, as the lines of nature and of the human figure are not formal and rigid, he recognized how much his picture would gain in force and stability if he actually introduced some architectural

features. This was a common practice with the artists of the Renaissance, and is one of the causes of the noble dignity of their pictures.

Bellini, in this one, has not only introduced architecture, but has adapted the character of the figures to it. How large and simple in mass are those of the bishops and monks, in which again appears the quiet grandeur of upright lines! Even in the figures of the Virgin and Child there is a strongly sculptural suggestion: her pose is so firm and still, the cloak arranged in such simple and resolute folds. And the statuesque character of this figure in blue is enhanced by the open spaces around it of crimson and gold, which isolate it and increase its suggestion of everlasting stability and calm. Immobile and permanent as the everlasting hills, she sits there through the changes of time, guarded by men of the people ennobled into types of physical and mental grandeur, perpetual symbol of Bellini's intellectual elevation.

After filling the whole of the north of Italy with his influence and preparing the way for the giant colorists of the Venetian School, Giorgione, Titian, and Veronese, Bellini died of old age in his eighty-eighth year, and was buried, near his brother Gentile, in the Church of SS. Giovanni e Paulo. Outside, under the spacious vault of heaven, stands the *Bartolommeo Colleoni,* Verrocchio's monumental statue, which had been among the elevating influences of Bellini's life and art.

Verrocchio's influence must have been exerted also upon Perugino, if it is true, as Vasari asserts, that when he left Perugia to complete his education in Florence he was a fellow-pupil of Leonardo da Vinci in the sculptor's *bottegha*. If he gained from the master something of the calm of sculpture, he certainly gained nothing of its force. It is as the painter of sentiment that he excelled; though this beautiful quality is confined mainly to his earlier works. For with popularity he became avaricious, turning out repetitions of his favorite types until they became more and more affected in sentiment.

CHAPTER 7
Raphael Sanzio / Michael Wolgemuth

1483-1520	1434-1519
Italian School of Umbria, Florence, and Rome	German School of Nuremberg

By the beginning of the sixteenth century the Renaissance in Italy had ripened into a golden harvest. Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Titian were in their prime, and within the long lives of these older men blossomed Raphael's comparatively brief life of thirty-seven years.

My reason for introducing him into our story a little before his chronological place is that now I wish to bring into comparison with Italian art the contemporary art of Germany. It seemed necessary to couple Leonardo and Dürer; therefore I took advantage of the fact that although Leonardo was older than Raphael he survived him, in order to join the latter with Wolgemuth, who was Dürer's master. For it is in Dürer, and later in Hans Holbein the Younger, that German art in the sixteenth century reached so high a point. Yet we may well study Wolgemuth, the better to appreciate the greatness of Dürer and Holbein, and also because his work is characteristic of the general art of Germany before these two great masters.

How it differs from Raphael's! The difference is wide and high as the Alps which separated the two civilizations of which these two painters were, respectively, a product. At this point, when Italy is approaching the zenith of her Renaissance, and that of Germany is about to dawn, it is well to glance back over the history of the two countries, which for over a thousand years had been acting and reacting upon each other.

Since the days of Julius Ceasar the German tribes had been in conflict with Rome, but upon the outskirts of the Empire. In the fifth century they began to crowd down upon Italy itself.

In 410 Alaric, at the head of his Visigoths, penetrated to the gates

of Rome, took it, and subjected it to a six days' pillage. Then Italy was ravaged successively by Attila and his Huns, by Ostrogoths and Lombards, until the genius of Charlemagne welded all the conflicting elements of the western world into the Holy Roman Empire (800 AD). But after his death the unwieldy structure succumbed to its own bulk; his descendants strove among themselves for supremacy, and the power of the feudal nobles was established. There followed a century and a half of domestic war, in which unhappy Italy was desolated by nobles and by invasions of Huns and Saracens, and filled with corruption and barbarism. At last, in 962, Otho the Great of Germany, having revived in his person the title of Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, set himself to curb the power of the nobles and of the church by encouraging the growth of the cities and giving them free municipal authority. The result was a long period of fighting between the Papacy and the Empire, out of which arose the factions of Guelphs and Ghibellines, who, under pretense of favoring, respectively, the church or emperor, committed every sort of atrocity. After two hundred years of social chaos, the destruction of Milan by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa so enraged the Guelph cities of the north that they formed a league, defeated his army, and at the Peace of Constance (1183) secured their recognition as free cities, each with its council and chief magistrate, or podestá. But again the lull was only brief. The maritime cities fought with one another for the supremacy of the sea; while everywhere the lack of military spirit in the cities and their domestic jealousies made it possible for the leading family of the city, or for the captains of fortune, to usurp the power of the people and establish themselves as despots. We have already noted how the Gonzaga family so established itself at Mantua, and the Medici family at Florence, glossing over their tyranny by the patronage of art and letters. Italy, crushed, was again at the mercy of all comers: of the rival despots, of the foreign mercenaries that they hired, and of bands of condottieri who sold their savagery to the highest bidders. Finally even her commercial power was menaced and ruined. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 cut off her trade with the Orient; in 1497 the Portuguese Vasco da Gama discovered the passage to India around the Cape of Good Hope; five years previously the Genoese Columbus had opened up the New

World; and the subsequent discoveries and conquests of Cortez, Pizarro, and others diverted the stream of commerce, depriving Italy of her supremacy and giving it to the western nations. In the sixteenth century nothing remained to Italy but the glory of arts, of letters, and of science, which in this period of national and civic humiliation reached its highest point of splendor: a terrible example, once more, of the truth that the finest culture will not save a nation, unless it is allied to the hardier virtues of manly courage and morality.

We have seen in previous chapters how people sought refuge from the turmoil in religion; how others turned from the horrors of the present to the beauties of the past, unearthing the remains of classic sculpture, recovering the manuscripts of the Roman authors, and drinking deep of the "New Learning" through the study of Greek literature. It is because the work of Raphael, apart from its technical skill and charm, combines so admirably the religious and the pagan feeling — the personal intensity and reverence of the one and the impersonal serenity and happiness of the other — that he holds a place distinct from any other artist. But, before pursuing this subject, let us turn to the conditions in Germany which produced a Wolgemuth as the forerunner of the greater Dürer and Holbein.

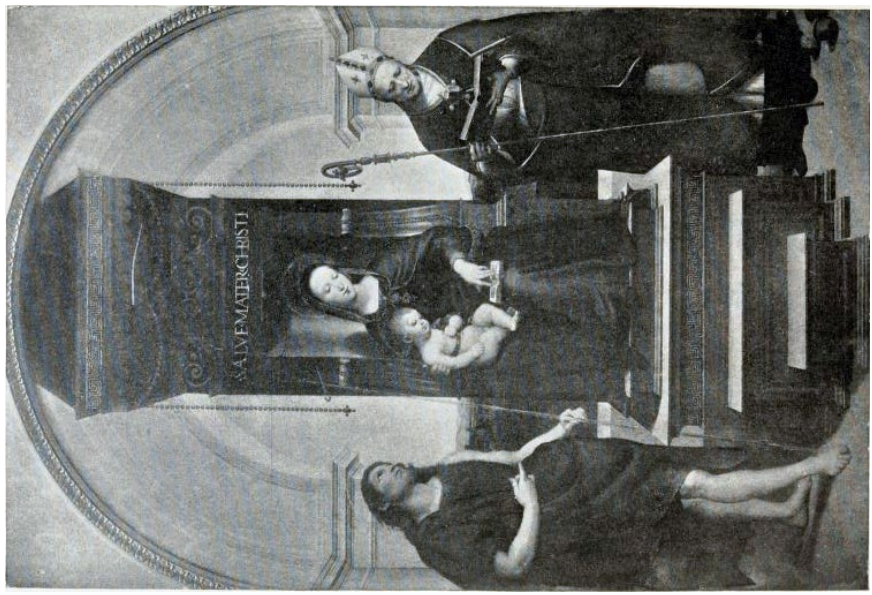
As each successive wave of Gothic invasion into Italy retired back behind the Alps, it carried with it some infusion of the civilization that it had destroyed. From this mingling of ancient culture with the untutored simplicity of the North sprang the modern world, with Christianity for its nurse. Art was the faithful handmaid of religion; and, as the northern world progressed toward civilization, the two worked together as mistress and servant. Germany, which at first was the country now known as Bavaria, did not escape the rigors of war; it kept the Huns at bay and extended its rule to the shores of the Baltic. As the vast tracts of land were opened up, population increased, people began to congregate in towns and cultivate the arts of peace. A steady flow of commerce set in from south to north and back again; the main arteries of traffic being the Rhine and the Elbe, by which the products of eastern and southern countries were transported from Venice or Genoa to Bruges and Antwerp and the growing Hanse towns of the north. So, while the country at large was torn with strife, there grew up along the banks of the rivers or their

connecting landways settlements of commercial people; towns, no longer centering round the castle of the local tyrant, but independent communities of peace-loving burghers, intent on their purses and ledgers rather than on swords and fighting. Midway in the path of commerce arose the famous cities of Nuremberg and Augsburg. Granted special favors by the emperors, they were free imperial cities, almost the only homes of liberty at that period; and they produced the two men who at that period rose to the highest rank in Germany as artists— Dürer and Holbein. Wolgemuth also was a native of Nuremberg.

This city was noted as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century for great mechanical activity and improvement in all kinds of machinery. She could boast the first German paper-mill and the celebrated printing-press of Antonius Koburger. In every branch of industry were men of skill and renown: watch- and clock-makers, metal-workers, and organ-builders, and particularly workers in gold. Nuremberg had the reputation of being the best-governed city in Europe; her merchants were nobles who extended their influence into every country, until it was said of her that her "hand is in every land." During the fifteenth century her progress in civilization was rapid; and the wealth of her citizens began to be spent more and more on things of beauty.

The German desire of the beautiful had first of all expended itself in the architecture of the cathedrals and churches. These differed from the ones of the South, first of all, as the vertical line differs from the horizontal; the aspiration of the eager, striving people of the North finding expression in soaring towers and spires, in high-pitched roofs supported upon lofty pillars.

This departure from the lower and more level lines of Southern architecture led to greater profusion and intricacy of the parts; to the multiplication and elaboration of details; to long-drawn-out naves and the addition of side aisles, producing in every direction vistas solemn and mysterious; to the enlargement of the window-spaces and the dividing of them by elegant traceries filled in with stained glass. These Gothic cathedrals differ from the Italian somewhat as the forests of Germany differ from the broadly sweeping plains and hills of Italy. And the German love of profusion and detail was exhibited also





Top: Madonna Degli Ansidei, Raphael Sanzio
Bottom: Death of the Virgin, Michael Wolgemuth

in the habit of decorating the exterior with sculpture and the interior with wrought metal-work and carved wood. Even to this day the dwellers in the Black Forest, like those who inhabit the forest regions of Norway and Sweden, spend the long days of winter in carving objects in wood. Wood-carving was one of the earliest of the arts in Germany; gradually it was supplemented by the sculpture in stone of floral or foliage designs, or of figures to decorate the cathedrals and churches — figures of saints, lean and angular, or of terrible and grotesque creatures. For the ancient religion from which Christianity had weaned the Northern tribes was that of Asgard, savage and cruel, believing in giants and dragons, and blending the fierceness of a wild beast with the imagination and ignorance of a child. So the Christianity of medieval Germany inherited what was terrible and grotesque. This is reflected in the sculpture, and thence passed into painting; for, at first, the latter was only a helpmate to the architecture and learned its first lessons from the sculptors. The early painters represented in their pictures what they were familiar with in wood and stone; so that not only are the figures dry and hard, but in the groups they are packed one behind another, heads above heads, without really occupying space, in imitation of the method adopted in the carved relief.

And this unpainter-like way of painting continued even to the middle of the fourteenth century, by which time, however, the painters began to take a more prominent position. For people who wished to show their respect to the church and at the same time to perpetuate their own memory found they could get a more pleasing effect, and probably at a less cost, in paint than in wood or stone. So there grew up a demand for votive pictures, to be set up over the altar or hung upon a pillar, and these represented sacred scenes, often with portraits of the donor and his family introduced.

The principal pictures of this character executed at Nuremberg in the last thirty years of the fifteenth century issued from the workshop of Wolgemuth. At first he was in partnership with Hans Pleydenwurff, and upon the latter's death married the widow and carried on the business in his sole name. For a business it really was; the workshop being rather like a factory than a studio. A number of assistants were maintained, and they were apportioned certain

specific parts of the same picture; it being the duty of one to fill in the architectural features, of another to paint the hands and heads, of others to put in the ornamental portions or the yarious objects introduced, and so on. The work, indeed, was carried on like any other commercial enterprise.

We have seen something of the same kind of thing in Perugino's *bottegha:* assistants multiplying the master's types, and turning out a quantity of indifferent pictures, apparently for no higher purpose than to make money. Raphael, also, during his sojourn in Rome, when the demand upon his genius was taxed beyond his power of personally executing every commission, maintained his corps of assistants. But he never lost his high ideals as an artist; and, although a large portion of his famous decorations in the Vatican were actually painted by his pupils, the designs were his. Moreover, his genius for design was so extraordinary, inexhaustible in invention, always beautiful in plan, and the influence of his own elevated spirit so strong over his assistants, that even their work bears the impress of his creativeness.

The Madonna which illustrates this chapter is called "degli Ansidei," because it was painted for the Ansidei family, as an altarpiece to adorn the chapel dedicated to S. Nicholas of Bari in the church of S. Fiorenzo at Perugia. It is dated 1506, and belongs therefore to the end of the first of the three periods into which Raphael's life may be divided. For he worked successively in Perugia, Florence, and Rome, and is, in a measure, representative of the Umbrian, Florentine, and Roman schools.

The house in Urbino still stands where he was born in 1483. His father, Giovanni Santi (or Sanzio in the Italian form), was a painter of considerable merit; so Raphael's art education began in early childhood and was continued uninterruptedly through the remainder of his life, for to the very end he was learning, being possessed of an extraordinary capacity for absorbing and assimilating the ideas of others. He was only eight years old when his mother, Magia, died; but the father's second wife, Bernardina, cared for him as if he had been her own son; and her tenderness and his love for her may surely have helped to inspire the beautiful conception of motherhood which he portrayed in his Madonnas. In 1494 his father also died, leaving the boy, now eleven years old, to the care of an uncle, who, it is supposed,

arranged for him to continue his studies under the painter Timoteo Vite, who was then living in Urbino. At about the age of sixteen he was sent to Perugia and entered in the renowned *bottegha* of Perugino.

This *Madonna degli Ansidei*, painted in his twenty-third year, is full of recollection of the master's influence. We may note the low-lying landscape with the vault of sky above it, and the union with these of solemn architecture; moreover, the "sweet Umbrian sentiment" in the expression of the faces; and that each figure seems alone with itself in spiritual contemplation. Even the rather awkward and affected attitude of S. John betrays the influence of Perugino.

But already the pupil has outstripped the master. The figure of S. Nicholas is nobler than anything that Perugino painted, and more full of character. With what truth it depicts the pose and bearing of an absorbed reader, while the character of the head gives a foretaste of those portraits by Raphael in later years, which, it has been said, have no superiors as faithful renderings of soul and body.

But in another respect he has already outstripped his master; namely, in the noble serenity of the composition. Perugino, as we have seen, in combining the figure and architecture and landscape, was a master of space composition, but never with so firm an instinct for grouping and arrangement that the masses shall be not only dignified in themselves, but perfectly balanced. For this is Raphael's supreme distinction. The Venetians surpassed him in color, the Florentines in drawing, but few, if any, have equaled him in his mastery over the filling of a space, whether it be inside a frame or on the larger surface of a wall.

Let us briefly consider this matter of composition, which is the artist's way of building up his effects. Much of our previous study has been occupied with the gradual approach of artists toward a more truthful representation of nature; so at this point we do well to remember that, although nature is the basis of art, art is not nature. The latter is a vast field from which the artist selects certain items, afterward arranging them in a certain way, so as to produce a certain impression on the spectator's mind through his eyes. Selection and arrangement, therefore, are the principles of composition.

Now the method of arrangement may either follow nature's, as in the case, for example, of a landscape; or it may be an artificial

arrangement, based upon conventions, such as in this picture of Raphael's. But even in the case of the landscape the artist must select. He must decide, in the first place, how much to include in his canvas, and then how he will place it according to the size and shape of his picture, leaving out, very likely, some of the objects of the natural landscape, since their introduction would interfere with the balance and unity of his picture.

If you stand a little distance from the open window and look out, it is improbable that what you see of the landscape will have either of these qualities. Probably the view will appear what it really is — a fragment of the landscape, its details, more than likely, confused or crowded. Or, if you approach nearer to the window, the view will widen out, but still you will feel that your gaze is hindered by the windows-frame. On the other hand, you look through a picture-frame, and you should be able to feel that what you see is a scene complete in itself, that it has unity. Again, if you examine some particular tree — say, for example, an elm, especially when the leaves are off — you may note how the limbs and branches, for all their diversities, seem to compose together to make a balanced whole. Its parts are so balanced, and their relation to the whole mass so perfectly adjusted, that you exclaim, "What a beautiful tree!" This principle of organic unity, which appears in all nature's tree and plant forms, the artist borrows to give unity and balance to the artificial arrangement on his canvas.

This arrangement, in the language of the studios, is made up of full and empty spaces. In a landscape, for example, the sky would be an empty space, though a sheet of water in the foreground, or even a stretch of meadow or distant hills, might be treated so. For it is in the way an object is treated that it becomes a full or an empty space; the full ones being those which are intended to assert themselves most. Thus, in Raphael's picture which we are studying they consist of the figures and the throne; the arch, which under some circumstances might be treated as a full space, here uniting with the sky and landscape to form the empty ones. And it is partly the equilibrium established between these and the full ones that makes the picture yield such a suggestion of wonderful composure. Another reason is the direction of the lines.

If you study them, you will find they present a contrast of vertical, horizontal, and curved lines; and will grow to discover that it is the predominance of the vertical direction— aided somewhat, it is true, by the dignity of the arch — which produces such an impression of elevated grandeur. Do not fail to notice what a share the repetition of line plays in this effect. It was by repetition that the predominance of the vertical lines was built up. But there are repetitions of horizontal lines also; for example, in those of the steps and the canopy, the cornice of the arch, and S. John's arm, as well as of the broken level line of the landscape. Moreover, there are repetitions of the curved lines, especially in the moldings of the arch. But these are repeated also in a subtler way; for example, in the nimbus of the Virgin, and in the arched dome of each of the heads.

Lastly, observe that the unity of the composition is made additionally sure by everything being adjusted to one point. The book on the Virgin's lap is the focus of the whole. The diagonal lines of the canopy, those of the cornice and of the steps, lead toward this spot; so do the direction of the Virgin's head and the downward glance of her eyes, the Child's gaze, the bishop's book, and S. John's right arm and its index-finger. While all these are radiating lines, they are inclosed — locked in, as it were — by the arch, the continuation of which into a circle is suggested by the direction of S. John's left arm.

All this is the reverse of natural arrangement, being the result of a most carefully calculated plan, based upon the knowledge that the actual directions of lines, their contrasts and their repetitions, exert upon the mind certain definite influences. You will observe that the basis of this design is geometric, as are nearly all the compositions of the old masters and of most modern painters; a continual shuffling and reshuffling of vertical, horizontal, and curved lines; a building of them up, so as to approximate to various geometric figures, such as the circle, the angle, the triangle, and the various forms of the quadrilateral, or any or all in combination. For some psychological reason, perhaps because these forms are rudimentary and elemental, they are instantly satisfactory to the eye, and when played upon by such a master of composition as Raphael produce the highest kind of

esthetic enjoyment.[15]

By this time it should be apparent that the beauty of Raphael's picture does not depend primarily upon the expression of the faces, which is the first thing that many people look at, nor, indeed, upon any or all of the figures, but upon what artists call the "architectonics" of the composition; that is to say, upon the way in which the parts of the composition are built up into a unified structural design. This, apart from anything to do with the subject or with the actors in it, moves our emotion in that abstract, impersonal way that the sight of mountains, skies, and valleys, or the roar of the ocean or the tinkle of a brook, may do. "The play's the thing," said Hamlet; and so we may say of composition, that "composition is the thing." It is the framework, the anatomy, upon which the artist subsequently overlays his refinements and embellishments of color and expression.

If you will study the *Madonna degli Ansidei*, you will find that the tenderness of the Madonna's face, the rapture of S. John's, and the noble sweetness of S. Nicholas's are all of them echoes of the same qualities expressed in the whole composition; but that it is the actual direction of the lines, the shapes of the full and empty spaces, and their relation to one another, which make the chief impression, and that the expression of the faces is only a subsidiary detail, just as you are impressed by the total structure of some great building before you begin to apprehend its details.

Perhaps you will best understand the meaning and value of perfect composition by contrasting Raphael's picture with Wolgemuth's *Death of the Virgin*. In the latter there is no composition in the sense that we are using the word — that is to say, of an arrangement carefully planned to impress us by its abstract qualities. It presents only a crowd of figures more or less naturally disposed. Our attention is not engrossed by the whole, but scattered over the parts.

And this characteristic, we shall find, appears to a considerable degree in all German art. The German race has an instinctive appetite for detail. Its scholars and scientists are renowned for minute,

[15] The student would do well to study, in the light of what we have been considering, every illustration in this book, for the sole purpose of trying to discover in each case the part which composition plays in the impression of the whole picture.

patient, and thorough research; its artists, for accurate rendering of details. But this often leads to profuseness, in the intricacy and abundance of which the structural dignity of the whole is apt to be swallowed up. For you will find, as you continue your studies, that there is even more art in knowing what to leave out than in knowing what to put in; that simplification of the parts and unity of the whole are the characteristics of the greatest artists.

Among the various contrasts which are presented by the two pictures, one may be singled out. Wolgemuth has tried to represent the scene naturally, as it may have happened, and has introduced around the Virgin figures, studied from the actual men who walked the streets of Nuremberg in his day; while Raphael's persons are idealized types adapted from the real people to express the idea which was in his mind. It is the same with his arrangement of throne and arch and landscape. The scene is not a real one; it is made up of things selected in order to build up a structure of effect that would suggest to our mind the idea which was in his. Here is a sharp distinction in the way of seeing the facts of nature. One artist sees in them something to be rendered as accurately as possible; the other extracts from them a suggestion on which he may found some fabric of his own imagination. From the one we get an impression of reality which is apt to go no further than the mere recognition of the facts; from the other, a stimulus to our own imagination. One form of art chains us to earth, the other aids us to take flight as far as our capacity permits us.

What helped to form Raphael's ideal? First of all, the spirituality of Perugino's pictures. Then he visited Florence: at first only for a short time, but before he painted the *Madonna degli Ansidei.* During his second and longer visit he became intimate with the work of Leonardo da Vinci and Fra Bartolommeo. The influence of the former can be seen in the mysterious beauty of the face in the *Madonna Gran Duca;* that of the latter, in the supremely beautiful composition of La Belle Jardiniere; while he gained also a freedom and greater naturalness in the drawing of his figures, and, through his friendship with the famous architect Bramante, a higher skill in the rendering of architectural forms and a deeper feeling for their grandeur. In fact, Raphael's capacity for being influenced by other artists was so

remarkable that he has been called the "Prince of Plagiarists." But we must remember that the reproach which nowadays attaches to a man's making use of the motives of others cannot be extended to Raphael. The artists of the Renaissance freely borrowed from one another, and multiplied certain types of picture; the innumerable varieties, for example, of *Madonna Enthroned* having a family resemblance. Similarly in Japan, when an artist had mastered the rendering of a certain object, such as a bird's wing, other artists adopted his convention. Why should every one go back to the beginning and study for himself what had been already mastered? Much better to start with the accumulated capital of previous experience and knowledge, and, if the student has any originality of his own, draw from it a heightened dividend.

It was so with Raphael. To whatever he took from another he added something of himself; so that, though his borrowings were continuous and varied, he enriched the world with something personal and new. We have seen already how this present picture, while recalling Perugino, represents a distinct advance on that artist's capacity; and when he went to Rome, begged by Pope Julius II to decorate the *stanze*, or official chambers, of the Vatican, the composition of his first mural painting, the *Disputá*, is based upon a previous design of his master, yet surpasses in its completeness of decorative effect anything of Perugino's. In Rome, too, he had for models the ampler type of women which belongs to the south of Italy. Consequently his work becomes distinguished by still greater freedom and bigness of style. And, as he mixes with the world of great men who thronged the Eternal City, two other things are noticeable: his pictures become more human: the Madonnas embrace the infant Christ with the love of human motherhood; and, secondly, he is filled more and more with ardor for the antique.

He intersperses religious with classic subjects, and treats both in a classic spirit. It is as if Virgil had come to life again, but this time as a painter, whose aim was to link the later glories of the Renaissance with the early ones of Hellas; to make the legends of Hellas live again in the soul of the Renaissance; and to interpret the stories of the Hebrew Bible in Hellenic guise. The beautiful myths of Galatea, of Psyche and Venus, once more become realities visible to mortal eyes;

Parnassus is again revealed; but now amid the constellation of Olympus appear the stars of Italian culture, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio; and in silent companionship with them are the mighty ones of Athenian thought, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Socrates, and others, once more returned to earth and assembled beneath the arches of a noble building of the Renaissance. Through him the beauty of the antique world is recovered to the sight and soul of the modern.

But even more remarkable is what Raphael did with that other great volume of thought which had taken the place of the Hellenic. He not only started afresh the springs of Hellas, but that vast stream, derived from the Hebrews, which had flooded Christian Europe he conducted into Hellenic channels. He represented the Bible stories in Hellenic settings, retold them, as I have said, in the manner that a Virgil might.

When you remember that the New Learning was a revolt from the darkness and superstition of the middle ages; that in the beauty of pagan thought the beauty of the Christian was being neglected; and that, consequently, a clash between the two might have ensued in which one would have perished, you will understand the importance of what Raphael did. As a gardener will blend the pollen of two kinds of flowers and produce a third which unites the beauties of the two, so Raphael blended the Hellenic and the Christian in his religious pictures; and this new ideal so captivated the imagination of the world that for over three hundred years men pictured the religious story to their eyes and minds through the Hellenic atmosphere in which Raphael had placed it. It was not until painters had begun to value realism overmuch, to be more concerned with representing the appearance of things than the spirit enshrined in them, that they protested against the "incongruity" of clothing a Jewish fisherman in Hellenic draperies.

But Raphael himself and the people of his day felt no incongruity in this. They had become acquainted with the ideal beauty of antique sculpture, and of the serene elevation of Greek thought; crude ideas realistically represented were intolerable to them. Yet there was a beauty in this Christian thought at least as elevated and far more vital, because it touched the human heart of man in its relation both to this life and the future. How could it be made manifest?

We have noted already Raphael's method and its effect upon the world of his time, continuing to our own.

CHAPTER VIII
Leonardo Da Vinci / Albrecht Dürer

1452-1519	1471-1528
Italian School of Florence	German School of Nuremberg

How instantly these two masterpieces, Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* and Dürer's *Adoration of the Magi*, seize our attention; yet how differently each claims our interest! In a general way, the difference consists in this, that the one is full of mystery, the other of clear statement. Leonardo has imagined a scene which appeals to our own imagination; Dürer has invented one that delights our understanding. The former's is a dream-picture, the latter's a wonderfully natural representation of an actual incident. In a word, while Dürer has tried to make everything plain to our eyes and understanding, Leonardo has used all his effort to make us forget the facts and realize the spirit that is embodied in them.

This contrast would alone make it worth while to compare the two pictures; but there are other reasons. These two men were contemporaries: Dürer, the greatest of German artists, most representative of the Teutonic mind; Leonardo, the most remarkable example of the intellect and imagination of the Italian Renaissance. It has been said of him that "he is the most thoughtful of all painters, unless it be Albrecht Dürer." So the fitness of comparing these two is evident.

Leonardo's early life was spent in Florence, his maturity in Milan, and the last three years of his life in France. Dürer, except for a visit of two years to Venice and of one year to the Netherlands, remained faithful to Nuremberg, the city of his birth.

Leonardo's teacher was Verrocchio — first a goldsmith, then a painter and sculptor: as a painter, representative of the very scientific school of draftsmanship; more famous as a sculptor, being the creator, as we remember, of the Colleoni statue at Venice. Dürer received his

first lessons from his father, who was a master-goldsmith; his subsequent training, as an apprentice in the studio-workshop of Michael Wolgemuth.

Both Leonardo and Dürer were men of striking physical attractiveness, great charm of manner and conversation, and mental accomplishment, being well grounded in the sciences and mathematics of the day, while Leonardo was also a gifted musician. The skill of each in draftsmanship was extraordinary; shown in Leonardo's case by his numerous drawings as well as by his comparatively few paintings, while Dürer is even more celebrated for his engravings on wood and copper than for his paintings. With both, the skill of hand is at the service of most minute observation and analytical research into the character and structure of form. Dürer, however, had not the feeling for abstract beauty and ideal grace that Leonardo possessed; but instead, a profound earnestness, a closer interest in humanity, and a more dramatic invention.

This sums up the vital difference between them; and it is worth while to consider, first, some of the causes of this difference, and, secondly, the effects of it as illustrated in their work, in respect both of choice of subjects and method of representing them.

No doubt it is true that genius is born, not made. But while it is a mistake to try and discover reasons for a man being a genius, it is proper and most interesting to note how his genius has taken on a certain shape and direction as a result of his environment.

Now, Dürer was born a German; Leonardo an Italian. A great deal of the difference between the ways in which the genius of these two men manifested itself may be summed up in this statement. The Italian race, under its sunny skies, has an ingrained love of beauty. The German, in a sterner climate — "How I shall freeze after this sun," wrote Dürer during his stay in Italy to a friend in Nuremberg — retains to this day the energy that carved its way through the vast forests of his country, and some of the gloomy romance that haunted their dark shadows. The German spirit is characterized by a "combination of the wild and rugged with the homely and tender, by meditative depth, enigmatic gloom, sincerity and energy, by iron diligence and discipline." Very remarkable qualities these, and to be found in Dürer's work, which is the reason that we describe him as being so





Top: Virgin of the Rocks, Leonardo da Vinci
Bottom: Visit of the Magi, Albrecht Dürer

representative of the Teutonic race.

But it was not only the difference of race that helped to mold the genius of these two men differently; each was a manifestation of the Renaissance of art and learning which was spreading over Europe: Leonardo of that form of it which appeared in Italy, and Dürer of that Avhich was beginning to appear in Germany. Had Dürer been born in Italy and reared up under Italian influences, and Leonardo's life been associated with Germany, who shall say what a difference would have resulted to the work of each? For the aim and character of these two branches of the Renaissance were very dissimilar.

The Italian, as we have seen, began by seeking a return to truth of natural form; but was soon influenced by the classic remains, which abounded in Italy and were so eagerly searched for and studied, that a worship of the antique, the Roman and Greek, absorbed men's minds. Raphael, as we have noted, clothed the story of the Bible in classic garb; classic myths, classic thought and literature, filled the imagination of the artists and thinkers; religion and a revived paganism skipped hand in hand. I use the word "skipped," because of the joy which possessed the Italians of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in the new realization of their racial love of beauty. Painter after painter before Leonardo's time had tried to give expression to it; he was the heir of their endeavors and the contemporary of a number of gifted men, who gathered at Florence and under the patronage of the Medici made it a reflection of what Athens had been under Pericles.

The different character of the German Renaissance we shall best appreciate by noting that it was a part of the great movement which produced Luther and the Reformation. It was first and foremost an intellectual and moral revival; in time to be the parent of that civil and religious liberty which was to reshape a large portion of the world. And intimately identified with this movement was the printing-press.

Dürer was a great admirer of Luther; and in his own work is the equivalent of what was mighty in the Reformer. It is very serious and sincere; very human, and addressed to the hearts and understandings of the masses of the people. And he had a particular chance of reaching them, for Nuremberg under the enterprise of Koburger, a "prince of booksellers," as one of his contemporaries called him, had become

a great center of printing and the chief distributer of books throughout Europe. Consequently the arts of engraving upon wood and copper, which may be called the pictorial branch of printing, were much encouraged. Of this opportunity Dürer took full advantage. He outdistanced all his predecessors in the art and brought it, at one bound, to such a pitch of perfection that his work was eagerly welcomed even in Italy, where pirated editions of his prints were published, and to-day he ranks first among wood-engravers and by the side of Rembrandt in engraving upon copper. Let us note the practical result of this upon his work as an artist.

Engraving as compared with painting is a popular art; many printings can be made from one plate or block and at comparatively slight cost, so that the artist's work reaches a great number of persons. It is easy to see how this might affect the character of his work: leading him to choose subjects with which the people were familiar; to treat them in a way that should secure their interest — that is to say, with simple directness and precision, and with dramatic earnestness that should appeal at once to the intelligence and the heart. That these qualities are characteristic of all Dürer's work, his paintings and engravings alike, may well have been due, in part at least, to his experience in the latter medium. But probably it would be more true to say that because these qualities were inherent in his personal character, they were reflected in his work and drew him particularly toward engraving.

It is quite possible, however, for pictures to be simple, precise, direct, and even dramatic, yet very commonplace. This Dürer's work never was; and that he contrived to make it so homely and natural and yet always dignified is because he was a genius, which is no more to be explained and accounted for in his case than in Shakspere's.

That he did not possess, as well, the gift of ideal beauty is due partly to the fact we have already noticed — that the Renaissance in Germany was more a moral and intellectual than an artistic movement — and partly to Northern conditions. For the feeling for ideal grace and beauty is fostered by the study of the human form; and this has been most flourishing in those Southern countries, such as Greece and Italy, where the climate favors a free, open-air life. In the Northern countries, clothes, being more necessary, assume a greater

importance. They are a very important feature in this picture of Dürer's, and recall the elaborate costumes in those which we have examined by Van Eyck and Memling. Nuremberg, as we have remarked, was on one of the highways of travel between Italy and the cities of the North Sea, but, while commerce was passing freely in both directions, the influence upon painting came to Germany chiefly from Flanders. As there, so in Germany, painting was closely allied with the decorative crafts, and the painters delighted in the portrayal of fabrics, metal, and woodwork. In this *Adoration of the Magi* we can detect at once the same fondness for depicting stuffs, embroidery, and objects of curious and beautiful workmanship as in Van Eyck's *Virgin and Donor;* and in the originals there is apparent, not only a similar skill in minute and elaborate details, but also a corresponding use of strong, rich coloring. But, while it was from Flanders that Dürer derived his style in painting, he passed beyond his exemplars in the variety and scope of his skill and in mental and moral force.

In the first place, no one has excelled him in delineating textures. You may see in this picture with what truth the different surfaces of wood, stone, hair, fur, feather, metal-work, embroidery, and so on are represented. This skill in textures is even more wonderfully exhibited in the black and white lines of his engravings. But the point particularly to be noted is that his genius does not stop short with the skill; back of it is a great force of intellectual and moral intention. He has the artist's love of the appearance of things, but he uses every object, not merely for its own sake and for the pleasure of representing it, but that it may enhance and intensify the main motive of his subject. On this occasion it is to contrast the splendor of the visitors from the East with the lowliness of the Mother and Child, and with the meanness of their surroundings; to contrast the harshness of the ruins with the dignity of the Mother, the innocent sweetness of the Babe, and the profound reverence of the Wise Men. He makes the scene impress us so deeply: in the first place, because he realized it himself so deeply, tenderly, reverentially, and powerfully in his own mind; and, secondly, because he has given to each figure and to every object its own quality and degree of character. He felt, and could convey to others, the significance of form; by which term I am trying to express two things.

First there is in the character of objects — their color, shape, hardness or softness, dullness or brilliance — a capacity to arouse our enjoyment. They excite especially what has been called our "tactile" sense; that is to say, the pleasure we get from actually handling things, or from having them represented to us in so real a way that we can imagine what would be the pleasurable sensation of touching them. But there is another way in which objects may be significant. For example, the things in our houses mean more to us than they would if we saw them set on a shelf in a shop window. In the latter case we enjoy only their appearance; in the other they are a part of our lives. Just in the same manner objects may be arranged in a painting so as to interest us only by their appearance, or in such a way that they are an actual part of the life of the picture.

This is a distinction that it is worth while to grasp, and no one can better help us to do so than Durer. We know at once that this Adoration of the Magi impresses us, and, when we study it, we discover that the secret of its impressiveness is the extraordinary significance which the artist has given to external appearances.

Here is the point at which the genius of Dürer and that of Leonardo, similar in many respects, branch out like a Y into separate directions. It is not with the external significance of objects, but with their inward and spiritual significance, that Leonardo was occupied. A glance at the *Virgin of the Rocks*[16] is sufficient to make us feel that the artist is not trying to impress us with external appearances. The outlines of his figures are not emphasized as in Dürer's picture; the cavern curiously formed of basaltic rock, and the little peep beyond of a rocky landscape and a winding stream, the group of figures in the foreground by the side of a pool of water — all are seen as through a veil of shadowy mist. They may be real enough, but far removed from the touch of man; less visible to eye-sight than to soul-sight. It was the passion of Leonardo's existence to peer into the mysteries and secrets of nature and life. He was at once an artist and a man of science; turning aside, for a time, from painting to build canals, to

[16] This illustration is reproduced from the picture in the Louvre. There is another example of the subject in the National Gallery, which is regarded by the majority of critics as a replica of the Louvre picture executed by another hand, probably under Leonardo's supervision.

contrive engines of war, to make mechanical birds which flew and animals which walked; while the range of his speculations included a foresight of the possibilities of steam and of balloons, a discovery of the law of gravitation, and a rediscovery of the principles of the lever and of hydraulics. Mathematician, chemist, machinist, and physiologist, geologist, geographer, and astronomer, he was also a supreme artist. And always it was the truth, just beyond the common experience of man, hidden in the bosom of nature or dimly discerned in the mind of man, that he strove to reach. Partly he grasped it, partly it eluded him; much of his life was spent in restless striving after the unattainable; so to him life presented itself as a compromise between certainty and uncertainty, between fact and conjecture; between truth that is clearly seen and truth that is only felt. And in his pictures it was this mingling of certainty and elusiveness that he sought to express.

The means he employed were, first, extreme delicacy and precision in the study and representation of form, and then a veiling of all in a gossamer web of chiaroscuro. He did not invent the principles of light and shade in painting, but he was the first to make them a source of poetical and emotional effect. Others had used chiaroscuro to secure the modeling of form by the contrast of light upon the raised parts with shadow on those farther from the eye; but Leonardo was the first to notice that in nature this contrast is not a violent one, but made up of most delicate gradations, so that the light slides into the dark and the dark creeps into the light, and even the darkest part is not opaque, but loose and penetrable. In making this discovery he discovered also that the general tint of an object — the "local" color, as the artists call it— gradually changes in tone as the object recedes from the eye, owing to the increase in the amount of intervening atmosphere. By representing in paint these delicate gradations of light and shade he succeeded in obtaining a subtlety of modeling that has never been surpassed; while, at the same time, the successive layers or planes of tone reproduce in his pictures the effect of nature's atmosphere.

Nature's, observe; because other artists of his time introduced an atmosphere of their own, bathing the figures, very often, in a golden glow which they obtained by washing a glaze over the whole or parts

of the picture; very beautiful, but quite arbitrary and conventional. Leonardo, however, like Masaccio, imitated the effects of real atmosphere, in which he anticipated, as we shall see, the nature study of Velasquez.

How subtle Leonardo's effects were may be noted in this picture; for example, in the modeling and fore- shortening of the limbs of the two infants, so exquisitely soft as well as firm, and in the lovely mystery of the faces of the Virgin and Angel. The latter belong to the same type as his portrait of *Monna Lisa:* oval faces with broad, high foreheads; dreamy eyes beneath drooping lids; a smile very sweet and a little sad, with a suggestion of conscious superiority. For as he searched nature for her mysteries, so he scanned the face of wo- man to discover the inward beauty that was mirrored in the outward. He made woman the symbol of what beauty and the search for beauty meant to himself, adding that infinitesimal touch of scornfulness, in acknowledgment that, after all his strivings to know and capture beauty, its deepest secret eluded him. Much of his life was spent in the search after what eluded him; he loved more to reflect and study than to put his ideas into actual shape.

So, while he and Dürer were alike in moral and intellectual greatness in their eager study of nature and in the elevation of their art, each had a different ideal which led them very far apart in the final character of their work. Dürer's is full of the meaning of appearances, Leonardo's of the mystery that lies behind them; the former is vigorous, direct, and powerfully arresting, the latter sensitive, strangely alluring, but baffling and elusive.

CHAPTER 9

Tiziano Vecelli (Titian) / Hans Holbein the Younger

1477-1576	1497-1543
Italian School of Venice	German School of Augsburg

It is because of the difference between these two wonderful portraits— Titian's *Man with the Glove* and *Portrait of Georg Gyze* by Hans Holbein the Younger— that it is interesting to compare them. In doing so we shall contrast not only the difference in the personalities of these two artists, and the conditions under which they worked, but also the difference of their points of view and consequently of their methods. Let us begin by studying the second difference, to an understanding of which the pictures themselves will direct us. If we should try to sum up in one word the impression produced by each, might we not say, "How *noble* the Titian is; the Holbein how *intimate*"? Both the originals are young men: Titian's unmistakably an aristocrat, but with no clue given as to who or what he was; Holbein's a German merchant resident in London, whose name is recorded in the address of the letter in his hand, and who is surrounded by the accompaniments of his daily occupation. Presently we shall find out something about the nature of his occupations; meanwhile we have surprised him in the privacy of his office, and are already interested in him as an actual man, who lived and worked over three hundred years ago, and very interested also in the objects that surround him. We note already that the flowers in the vase are just like the carnations of our own day, but that the character of his correspondence is very different. Evidently he is a prosperous man, but compare the fewness of his letters with the packet which one morning's mail would bring to a modern merchant. Each is fastened with a band of paper, held in place by a seal; he has just broken the band of the newly arrived letter; his own seal is among the objects that lie on the table. But I interrupt the fascinating examination of these details to ask whether we do not feel already that we are

growing intimate with the man.

Can we feel the same toward the *Man with the Glove*? Certainly, when we have once possessed ourselves of the appearance of this man's face, we shall not forget it. But that is a very different thing from knowing the man as a man. There is something, indeed, in the grave, almost sad, expression of the face which forbids, rather than invites, intimacy. He, too, seems to have been surprised in his privacy; but he is occupied, not with his affairs, as Georg Gyze is, but with his thoughts. It is not the man in his every-day character with whom we have become acquainted; indeed, it is not with the man himself that we grow familiar, but with some mood of a man, or, rather, with some reflection in him of the artist's mood at the time he painted him.

For Titian found in the original of this portrait a suggestion to himself of something stately and aloof from common things; he made his picture interpret this mood of feeling; he may have been more interested in this than in preserving a likeness of the man; we may even doubt whether the man was actually like this. Certainly, this could not have been his every-day aspect, in which he appeared while going about whatever his occupation in life may have been; it is one abstracted from the usual, an altogether very choice aspect, in which what is noblest in his nature is revealed without the disturbance of any other condition.

It is, in fact, an idealized portrait, in which everything is made to contribute to the wonderful calm and dignity of the mood. The name of the original has not been handed down; there is no clue to who or what this man was — only this wonderful expression of feeling; and, as that itself is so abstract, exalted, idealized, baffling description, posterity has distinguished this picture from others by the vague title, *Man with the Glove.*

Here, then, is another distinction between these pictures of Titian's and Holbein's. The treatment of the former is idealistic, of the other realistic. Both these artists were students of nature, seeking their inspiration from the world of men and things that passed before their eyes. But Holbein painted the thing as it appealed to his eye, Titian as it appealed to his mind; Holbein found sufficient enjoyment in the truth of facts as they were, Titian in the suggestion that they

gave him for creating visions of his own imagination; the one viewed the world objectively and was a realist, the other subjectively and idealized.

This, of course, is a distinction not confined to these two artists. Indeed, all the comparison we have been making between their respective points of view is of general application. The distinction between the subjective, universal, and idealistic on the one hand, and the objective, particular, and realistic on the other, repeatedly confronts us in the study of art. In fact, every artist illustrates either one or other of these points of view, or, more usually, a combination of the two: hence, to appreciate the work of various men, it is necessary to grow to a clear understanding of these contrasts and of the innumerable degrees to which they may shade into each other. So large a subject cannot be exhausted by the comparison of any two pictures; yet from these by Titian and Holbein a considerable insight may be gained.

In what respect was Holbein a realist? In our study of art we should be very distrustful of words. We cannot do without them, but must remember that they have no value of themselves; that they are only valuable as far as they provide a shorthand expression of some idea. The idea, and not the word in which it is clothed, is the important thing; but unfortunately a word cannot have the completeness and finality of a mathematical formula. In arithmetic, for instance, $2x2=4$ is universally true; but in the world of ideas there are so many "ifs and ans" that the exact statement is impossible. So beware of words, and, instead of being satisfied with phrases, try to think into and all around the thought that is behind the phrase.

What, then, is a realist? Naturally, one who represents things as they really are. But can anybody do that? If ten men the equals of Holbein in observation and skill of hand had sat down beside him to paint the portrait of Georg Gyze and his surroundings, would their pictures have been identical? Could even any two men, working independently, have painted the ink-pot alone so that the two representations would be identical? Have any two men exactly similar capacity of eyesight; and, if they have, will they also have exactly identical minds? The fact is, a man can draw an ink-stand only as its appearance physically affects his eye and makes a mental impression

on his brain. In other words, objects, so far as we are concerned, have no independent reality; you cannot say, "This is what an apple really looks like," but only, "This is how it presents itself real to me." The personal equation intervenes; that is to say, the personal limitation of each individual.

So, in the strict sense of representing an object as it really is, no painter can be a realist; while, in the general sense of representing an object as it seems real to his eye and brain, every painter may be called a realist. Then how shall we discover the meaning of the word "realist" as used in painting? Let us look for an explanation in the two pictures.

Both painters represented what seemed real to them; but do we not observe that, while Titian was chiefly occupied with the impression produced upon his *mind*, it was the impression made upon the *eye* which gave greater delight to Holbein? No man who did not love the appearances of things would have painted them with so loving a patience. While to Titian the thing which appeared most real about this man, the thing most worth his while to paint, was the impression made upon his mind, so that what he painted is to a very large extent a reflection of himself, a mood of his own subjectivity, Holbein concentrated the whole of himself upon the objects before him. His attitude of mind was objective. His intention was simply to paint Georg Gyze as he was known to his contemporaries — a merchant at his office table, with all the things about him that other visitors to the room would observe and grow to associate with the personality of Gyze himself.

We may gather, therefore, that realism is an attitude of mind; one that makes the painter subordinate himself and his own personal feelings to the study of what is presented to his eye; which makes him rejoice in the appearances of things and discover in each its peculiar quality of beauty; which makes him content to paint life simply as it manifests itself to his eye, to be indeed a faithful mirror of the world outside himself.

It is not because Holbein was a realist that he is celebrated, but because of the kind of realist he was. You will find that realism often runs to commonplace; a man may see chiefly with his eye because he has little mind to see with; may take a delight in the obviousness of

facts because he has no imagination; the material appeals to him more than the spiritual. But Holbein was a man of mind, who attracted the friendship of Erasmus, the greatest scholar of his age; and he brought this power of mind to the enforcing of his eye. The result is that the number and diversity of the objects in this portrait do not distract our attention from the man, but rather seem to increase our acquaintance with his character and disposition. We recognize the order and refinement which surround him, and find a reflection of them in his face. On the other hand, when we examine the details, we find each in its way exquisitely rendered; for, as I have said, Holbein loved things of delicate and skilful workmanship, and left many designs for sword-scabbards, dagger-sheaths, goblets, and goldsmith's work.

Yet compared with the elaborated detail of Holbein's portrait, how large, simple, and grand is the composition of Titian's! The aim of the one artist was to *put in* everything that was possible *without injury to the total effect;* of the other to *leave out* everything but what was *essential*. Holbein's picture is a triumph of well-controlled elaboration; Titian's of simplification. I hope to show further that this distinction is characteristic of the personality of these two men; but, for the present, let us notice how completely each method suits the character of the subject: the man of affairs, calm and collected amid a quantity of detail, the man of contemplation, aloof from every distraction.

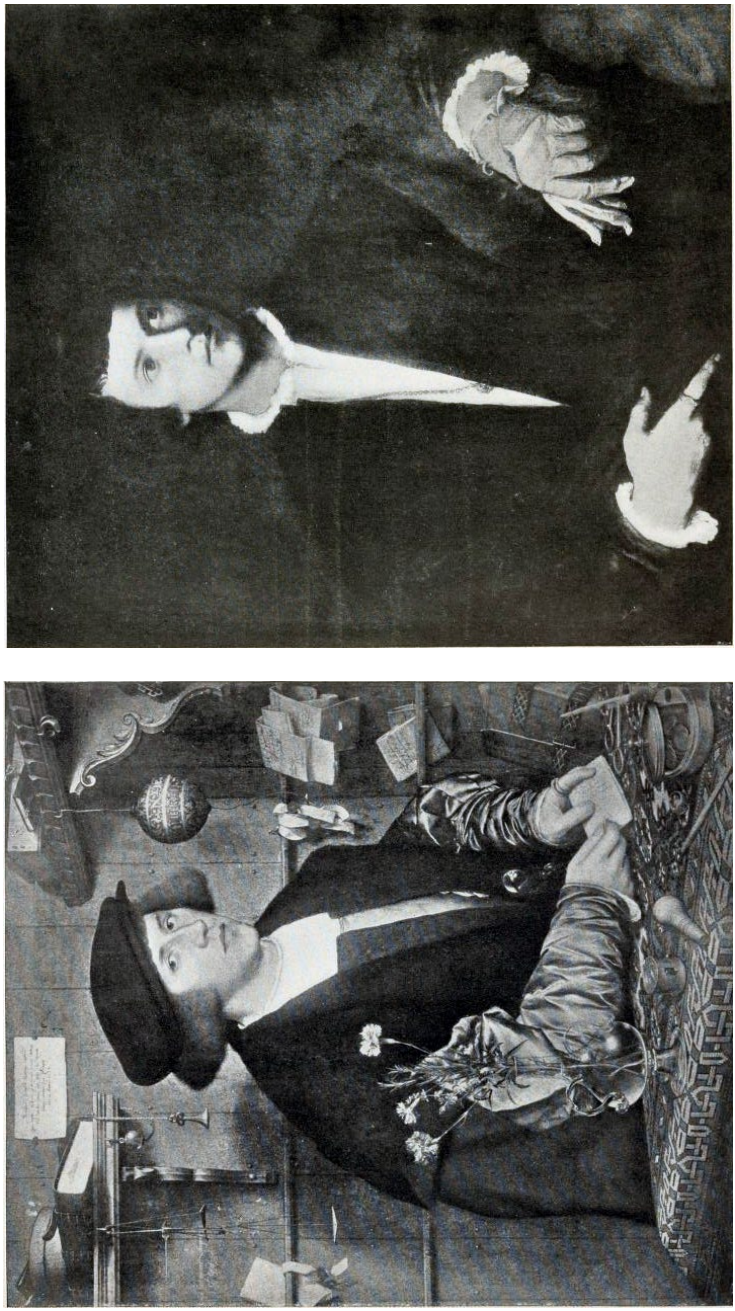
That Holbein painted all these details because he felt them to be really part of the personality of Gyze may be inferred from the fact that, though he loves to introduce little objects of choice workmanship, his treatment of the portrait of a scholar like Erasmus is very large and simple. Yet even then there is a minuteness of finish in the modeling of the flesh and in the painting of the hair and costume, which might easily be niggling and trivial, but that in Holbein's case it is only part of the singular penetration of his observation and extraordinary manual delicacy, brought to the rendering of something which he has studied with all the strength of his manhood.

Yet the breadth and simplification of Holbein are not like Titian's, being simply and sweetly dignified, where Titian's are majestically grand. Turn again to the *Man with the Glove*. Shut out with

your fingers, first one of the hands, then the other, and then the sweep of shirt, and notice each time how the balance and dignity of the composition are thereby destroyed; for its magic consists in the exact placing of the lighter spots against the general darkness of the whole. By this time we realize that the fascination of this portrait is not only in the expression of the face and in the wonderful eyes, but also in the actual pattern of light and dark in the composition. Then, taking the face as the source and nucleus of the impression which the picture makes, we note how the slit of the open doublet echoes the piercing directness of the gaze; how the expression of the right hand repeats its acute concentration, while the left has an ease and elegance of gesture which correspond with the grand and gracious poise of the whole picture.

Grand and gracious poise! Not altogether an unapt characterization of Titian himself. At once a genius and a favorite of fortune, he moved through his long life of pomp and splendor serene and self-contained. He was of old family, born at Pieve in the mountain district of Cadore. By the time that he was eleven years old his father, Gregorio di Conte Vecelli, recognized that he was destined to be a painter and sent him to Venice, where he became the pupil, first of Gentile Bellini, and later of the latter's brother, Giovanni. Then he worked with the great artist Giorgione. From the first, indeed, he enjoyed every privilege that an artist of his time could desire. The Doge and Council of Venice recognized his ability; the Dukes of Ferrara and Mantua followed suit; and, as the years went on, kings, popes, and emperors were his friends and patrons. In his home at Biri, a suburb of Venice, from which in one direction the snowclad Alps are visible and in the other the soft luxuriance of the Venetian Lagoon, he maintained a princely household, associating with the greatest and most accomplished men of Venice, working on until he had reached within a year of a century of life. Even then it was no ordinary ailment, but the visitation of the plague, that carried him off; and such was the honor in which he was held, that the law against the burial of the plague-stricken in a church was overruled in his case and he was laid in the tomb which he had prepared for himself in the great Church of the Frari.

No artist's life was so completely and sustainedly superb; and



Top: Man with the Glove, Titian
Bottom: Portrait of Georg Gyze, Holbein the Younger

such, too, is the character of his work. He was great in portraiture, in landscape, in the painting of religious and mythological subjects. In any one of these departments others have rivaled him, but his glory is that he attained to an eminence in all; he was an artist of universal gifts — an all-embracing genius, equable, serene, majestic.

The genius of Holbein also blossomed early. His native city of Augsburg was then at the zenith of its greatness; on the highroad between Italy and the North, the richest commercial city in Germany, the frequent halting-place of the Emperor Maximilian. His father, Hans Holbein the Elder, was himself a painter of merit, and took the son into his studio. A book of sketches made during this period by the young Hans, preserved in the Berlin Museum, shows that he was already a better draftsman than his father. In 1515, when he was eighteen years old, he moved to Basel, the center of learning, whose boast was that every house in it contained at least one learned man. Here he won the friendship and patronage of the great printer Froben and the burgomaster Jacob Meyer. For the former's books he designed woodcuts; for the latter he painted a portrait, and, later, the famous *Meyer Madonna*. In this the Virgin is represented as standing, and the Meyer family kneeling: the father and his two sons on the right, and opposite to them his deceased first wife and his then living second wife and only daughter. In 1520, the year of Luther's excommunication, he was admitted to citizenship at Basel and to membership in the painters' guild: sufficient testimony, as he was only twenty-three, to his unusual ability.

In that same year Erasmus returned to Basel, and accepted the post of editor and publisher's reader to his friend Froben. Erasmus spoke no modern language except his native Dutch, and Holbein seems to have been ignorant of Latin, yet a friendship sprang up between the two, and the artist designed the woodcuts for the scholar's satirical book, "The Praise of Folly," and painted his portrait. About this time he made the famous series of designs of the *Dance of Death*; the drawings of which were so minute and full of detail that when Hans Lützelberger, their engraver, died in 1527, it was ten years before another wood-engraver could be found sufficiently skilled to render the action and expression of the tiny figures.

But book illustration was poorly paid and the times were lean ones

for the painter, since the spread of the Reformation had cut off the demand for church pictures. Holbein found himself in need of money, and accordingly, by the advice of Erasmus, set out for London with a letter of introduction from the scholar to Sir Thomas More, the King's Chancellor.

"Master Haunce," as the English called him, arrived in England toward the close of 1526. The London of that day presented some crude contrasts. Side by side with buildings of Gothic architecture had arisen later ones of Renaissance design, but the average houses were still of wood and mud, huddled together in very narrow streets, the rooms small and the flooring of the lowest story merely the beaten earth. The houses of the upper class lined the bank of the Thames, and it was in one of these, situated in what was then the village of Chelsea, that Sir Thomas More lived. Here Holbein was welcomed, and made his home during this first visit to England. He painted portraits of many of the leading men of the day, and executed drawings for a picture of the family of his patron, which, however, was never painted; for, two years later, in consequence of an outbreak of the plague, he returned to Basel.

But Basel was no longer what it had been: Froben was dead; Erasmus, Meyer, and others of the cultivated class had abandoned the city, which was in the clutches of the Reformers, who showed their zeal for religion by a crusade against art. Consequently, in 1531, Holbein returned to England. But here, too, had been changes; More was in disgrace, so that Holbein, cut off from court patronage, attached himself to the merchants of the Steelyard.

These were the London representatives of the Hanseatic League, a combination of commercial cities, at the head of which were Lübeck and Hamburg. It had been formed as early as the thirteenth century, for mutual protection against piracy and to promote the general interests of trade, and had established factories, or branches, in various places, as far removed as London and Novgorod. These, under special privileges derived from the respective governments, gradually absorbed the main business of the import and export trade. Georg Gyze was a member of the London factory, a merchant of the Steelyard, and in his portrait the steelyard or scale for the weighing of money, the symbol also of the merchant guild, hangs from the shelf

behind his head.

By 1587 Holbein had come to the notice of Henry Vin, and was established as court painter, a position which he held until his death. This seems to have occurred during another visitation of the plague in 1543; for at this date knowledge of the great artist ceases. When he died or where he was buried is not known.

What a contrast between his life and Titian's! One the favorite, the other the sport, of fortune. For though the greatness of both was recognized by their contemporaries, Titian lived a life of sumptuous ease in the beautiful surroundings of Venice, while Holbein, often straitened for money, never wealthy, experienced the rigor of existence; more or less a victim to the religious convulsions of the time, forced by need and circumstances to become an alien in a strange land, dying unnoticed and unhonored. The world to Titian was a pageant, to Holbein a scene of toil and pilgrimage. Titian viewed the splendor of the world in a big, healthful, ample way; and represented it with the glowing brush of a supreme colorist. On the other hand, Holbein is eminent in German art because he finally emancipated it from Gothic thraldom. He was the foremost artist of the German Renaissance, beside whom Dürer seems to belong to the middle ages. Yet the latter's art must be joined with his to produce a complete representation of the genius of the race. In both are manifested the decorative feeling, the eager curiosity, the love of elaborate detail that distinguish German art. But, while Holbein reflected the conscientiously earnest, matter-of-fact spirit, Dürer reflected also the romantic temperament that underlies it. After these two, if we except Lucas Cranach, no painter in German art demands the student's attention until the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 10
Antonio Allegri / Michelangelo Buonarroti

(called Correggio) 1494(?) – 1534 Italian School of Parma

1474 – 1564 Italian School of Florence

It would be impossible to imagine a greater contrast than the one presented by these two pictures— Correggio's *Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* and the *Jeremiah* by Michelangelo. And the difference is all the more worth studying because these artists are the most typical representatives of two very different phases of that wonderful outburst of energy which we call the Renaissance.

We have seen how two currents of striving united in Raphael's work; how he satisfied the old religious yearning as well as the newly aroused passion for the antique; how he reclothed the Bible story in classic guise. We have seen, too, that in Leonardo da Vinci were revealed the subtlety of his time, its eagerness for perfection, the dawn of the spirit of scientific inquiry, which, reawakened by the study of Aristotle and Plato, was searching into the mystery of the universe and man's relation to it; and that in this peering forward Leonardo anticipated some of the facts of science rediscovered and established by later philosophers and scientists.

We can now study in Correggio that element in the Renaissance conveniently called "pagan"; which, for the present, may be briefly summarized as a tendency to look back further than the beginning of the Christian religion, further, even, than the classic times, to that dream of a golden age, of perfect peace and happiness and innocence, when men and women lived a natural life, and shared the woods and streams, the mountains and the fields, with satyrs, nymphs, and fauns. Correggio has been called the "Faun of the Renaissance."

But in those splendid yet terrible days of the Renaissance peace was continually disturbed by wars and civil strife; innocence crept to shelter from the wickedness which shamelessly prevailed; and

happiness went hand in hand with anguish. Italy of that day was like a huge caldron into which all the human passions, good and evil, had been flung, while underneath it was the fire of an impetuous race, that after long smoldering had now leaped up with volcanic force. The seething tumult of these contending passions is reflected in the work of Michelangelo.

While Correggio represents the exquisite fancifulness of that period, Michelangelo is an embodiment of its soul.

Compare again these two pictures. Correggio has here taken for his subject one of the beautiful legends of the church. Catherine was a lady of Alexandria who, living about 300 AD, dared to be a Christian, and eventually died for her faith by the torment of the wheel, which latter appears as an emblem in many of her pictures. She had a vision in which it was made known to her that she should consider herself the bride of Christ; and the theme of this mystic marriage was a favorite one in the turbid times of the Renaissance, when women sought the cloister as a refuge from the wickedness and tyranny of the world.

But how has Correggio treated this subject? Does he make you feel the sacrifice of Catherine; or suggest to you anything of the religious fervor and devotion with which the vision must have inspired herself? In the background are little figures, scarcely to be seen in the illustration, which, if you search into them, tell of suffering; but they do not really count in the impression which the picture makes upon us. What we get from it as a whole is a lovely, dreamy suggestion, as of very sweet people engaged in some graceful pleasantry. The mother is absorbed in love of her child, wrapped up in the consciousness, common to young mothers, that her child is more than ordinarily precious. The baby itself is a little, roguish love, a brother of the little Cupids and *putti* that abound in Correggio's pictures, eying with the watchful playfulness of a kitten the hand of Catherine. The latter inlays her part in the ceremony with little more feeling than that of any other child-worshiper; while the St. Sebastian, with his bunched locks reminding us of ivy and vine leaves, has the look of the youthful Dionysos, the arrow recalling the thyrsus which the young god used to carry.

There is not a trace of religious feeling in the picture, or of mystic

ecstasy — only the gentle, happy peace of innocence. There may be violence out in the world, but far away; no echo of it disturbs the serenity of this little group, wrapped around in warm, melting, golden atmosphere. Elsewhere may be hearts that throb with passion, consciences sorely eager to do right or stricken with the memory of sin; but not in this group. These beings are no more troubled with conscience than the lambs and fawns; their hearts reflect only the lovableness of their sunny existence, as the placid pool reflects the sunlight. They are the creatures of a poet's golden dream.

Compare with them the *Jeremiah*. Here, instead of delicate gracefulness, are colossal strength, ponderous mass, profound impressiveness; back and legs that have carried the burden, hands that have labored, head bowed in vast depth of thought. And what of the thought?

More than two thousand years had passed since Jeremiah hurled his denunciations against the follies and iniquity of Judah, and in his Lamentations uttered a prophetic dirge over Jerusalem, hastening to become the prey of foreign enemies. And to the mind of Michelangelo, as he painted this figure of *Jeremiah*, sometime between 1508 and 1512 — that is to say, between his thirty-fourth and thirty-eighth years — there was present a similar spectacle of his own beloved Italy reeling to ruin under the weight of her sins and the rivalries of foreign armies, and perhaps also a prophetic vision of how it would end. As Jeremiah lived to see the fall of Jerusalem, so Michelangelo lived to see the sacred city of Rome sacked in 1527 by the German soldiery under the French renegade Constable Bourbon.

It is the profundity of Michelangelo's own thoughts that fills this figure of *Jeremiah*. Like the Hebrew prophet's life, his own was a protest against the world. Jeremiah fled to Egypt; Michelangelo into the deepest recess of his own soul. In this figure of *Jeremiah* he has typified himself.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, who shall say? Always the artist puts into his work a portion of himself, and of this feeling in himself that he is striving to express he is of course conscious. But this feeling is the sediment left in him from many experiences, some — the most of them, probably — forgotten; so, as he labors to express it in his painting or statue, he very likely is not conscious of its

personal application to himself, being absorbed by the work before him. And still more likely is this unconsciousness in the case of great artists; for in them there is more than memory and experience, more even than knowledge and imagination: something inexplicable to us, not to be understood by themselves; what we vaguely call soul, and the ancients, more vaguely still, but with nearer approach to truth, called "afflatus" — divine inspiration.

The French philosopher Taine wrote: "There are four men in the world of art and literature so exalted above all others as to seem to belong to another race — namely, Dante, Shakspeare, Beethoven, and Michelangelo."

They are of the race of the Titans, the giant progeny of heaven and earth. The old race warred with heaven, but was finally subdued and sent down to Tartarus. Three, at least, of these modern Titans, Dante, Beethoven, and Michelangelo, were at continual war in their souls with conditions that environed them, and found hell on earth. Not that the world treated Michelangelo worse than many others; but, as Taine says, "suffering must be measured by inward emotion, and not by outward circumstances; and, if ever a spirit existed which was capable of transports of enthusiasm and passionate indignation, it was his." Such a man as Michelangelo could not escape from the tempest of the world by wrapping himself up in dreams of a "golden age," as Correggio did.

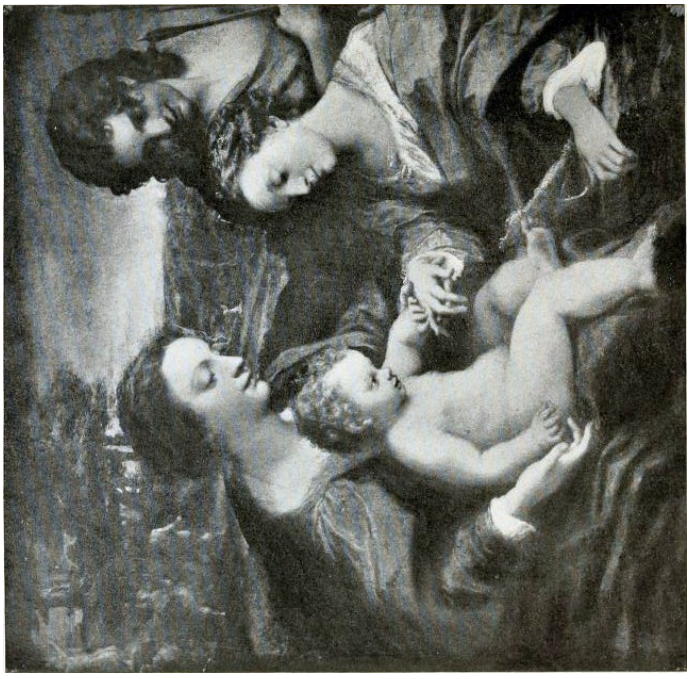
Once more compare the two pictures, to observe the difference of their technic. One reason of difference is that Correggio's is painted in oil on canvas, Michelangelo's in fresco on the plaster of the ceiling. The meaning of the word "fresco" is "fresh," and the peculiarity of the method consisted in painting on the plaster while it was still damp, so that the colors, which were mixed with water, in the process of drying became incorporated with the plaster. The wall or ceiling to be so decorated was coated with the rough-cast plaster and allowed to dry thoroughly; after which a thin layer of smooth finish was spread over as large a portion of the surface as the artist could finish in one day. Meanwhile he had prepared his drawing, and, laying this against the surface, went over the lines of it with a blunt instrument, so that, when the drawing or cartoon was removed, the outline of the figures appeared, incised in the damp plaster. Then he applied

the color, working rapidly, with a full assurance of the effect which he wished to produce, since correction, or working over what had already been painted, was not easy.

On the contrary, with oil paints the artist can work at his leisure, allowing his canvas time to dry, working over it again and again, and finally toning it all together by brushing over it thin layers of transparent colors, called glazes. It was by the use of these latter that Correggio obtained the warm, melting atmosphere in which his figures are bathed, and which is one of the distinguishing characteristics of his style. We can realize at once how this method was suited to the dreamy luxuriance of his imagination; while, on the contrary, more in harmony with the genius of Michelangelo was the immediate, smiting method of the fresco. For in the strict sense of the word he was not a painter; that is to say, he was not skilled in, and probably was impatient of, the slower, tenderer way in which a painter reaches his results. He was not a colorist, nor skilled in the rendering of light and atmosphere; but a great draftsman, a great sculptor, and a profound thinker. He labored with his subject in his brain, and then expressed it immediately with pencil or charcoal, or more gradually by blows of the mallet upon the chisel. But in either case it was the thought, straight out from himself in all the heat of kindled imagination, that he set upon the paper, or struck out with forceful action of the tool.

He used to say that he had sucked the desire to be a sculptor from his foster-mother, the wife of a stonecutter; and in his later life, when sore oppressed, he would retreat to the marble-quarries of Carrara under color of searching for material. To him each block of marble, rugged, hard, and jagged, held a secret, needing only the genius of his chisel to liberate it; and in the same way his own soul was imprisoned in a personality eternally at odds with the world, that to the seven popes whom he successively served during his long life of eighty-nine years seemed very hard and unyielding.

It is the feeling of the sculptor that we recognize in this painting of *Jeremiah*; the feeling for solidity and weight of mass, for stability of pose; a preference for simple lines and bold surfaces, arranged in a few planes. To appreciate this distinction, compare Correggio's picture: its intricacy of lines, the distance of its receding planes, but more





Top: Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine, Correggio
Bottom: Jeremiah, Michelangelo

particularly the character of its composition, consisting of so many varieties of lighted and shadowed parts, and the absence of suggestion that the figures are firmly planted. While Correggio has relied upon beautiful drawing, upon exquisite expression of hands and faces, and on color, light, and shade, and his golden atmosphere that envelops the whole, Michelangelo relied solely upon form — the form of the figure and of the draperies. This is to admit that, judged from the standpoint of painting, he was not a great painter. He himself told Pope Julius II, when the latter requested him to paint this ceiling of the Sistine Chapel at Rome, that he was not a painter, but a sculptor; yet, after he had shut himself up for four years, and the scaffold was removed, a result had been achieved which is without parallel in the world.

Very wonderful is the profusion of invention spread over this vast area of ten thousand square feet. The fact that there are three hundred and forty-three principal figures, many of colossal size, besides a great number of subsidiary ones introduced for decorative effect, and that the creator of this vast scheme was only thirty-four when he began his work — all this is wonderful, prodigious, but not so wonderful as the variety of expression in the figures.

If there is one point more than another in which Michelangelo displayed his genius it is in this, that he discovered the capability of the human form to express mental emotions. While the ancient Greeks sought, in their rendering of the human form, an ideal of physical perfection, and the later Greeks, as in the group of Laocoon and his sons attacked by serpents, sought to express the tortures of physical suffering, Michelangelo was the first to make the human form express a variety of mental emotions. In his hands it became an instrument, upon which he played, like a musician on his organ, extracting themes and harmonies of infinite variety. And just as it is within the power of music to call up sensations, which we feel deeply and yet cannot exactly put into words, which elude us and merge themselves in the abstract and the universal, so Michelangelo's figures carry our imagination far beyond the personal meaning of the names attached to them. We know, for example, who Jeremiah was, and what he did; but this figure, buried in thought, of what is he thinking? To each one of us, thoughtfully considering the picture, it

has a separate meaning.

On the other hand, we could come very near to a mutual understanding of the emotions aroused by Correggio's picture; although he too, as we have seen, was intent upon representing, not the concrete fact of a marriage, but the abstract ideas of peace, happiness, and innocence. Therefore, the difference between the ways in which these two pictures affect us is not one of kind, but of degree. Both detach our thoughts from the concrete and carry our imagination away into the world of abstract emotions; but while Correggio's appeals to us like a pastoral theme by Haydn, Michelangelo's is to be compared to the grandeur and soul-searching impressiveness of Beethoven.

Michelangelo, therefore, compels us to enlarge our conception of what is beautiful. To the Greeks it was physical perfection; to Correggio physical loveliness joined to loveliness of sentiment; but Michelangelo, except in a few instances, such as his painting of *Adam* on the Sistine vault, and his sculptures of the *Pietá*, and of the figure of the *Thinker* over the tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici, cared little for physical beauty. As far as we know, he reached the age of sixty-four years without ever being attracted by the love of woman; then he met the beautiful Vittoria Colonna, widow of the Marquis of Pescara. They were mutually drawn together by the bond of intellectual and spiritual sympathy; their communion was of soul with soul; and Michelangelo, now moved by love to be a poet, expressed his soul in sonnets, as beforetime he had done in sculpture and painting.

The beauty, therefore, of his sculpture and paintings consists finally in the elevation of soul which they embody and the power they have to elevate our own souls. Their beauty is elemental; for example, the picture we are studying is not so much a representation of Jeremiah, as a typal expression of a great soul in labor with heavy thoughts. Accordingly, in Michelangelo's figures, lines of grace are for the most part replaced by lines of power — the power of vast repose or of tremendous energy, even of torment, either suppressed or desperate. Though a master of anatomy and of the laws of composition, he dared to disregard both if it were necessary to express his conception: to exaggerate the muscles of his figures, and even put them in positions which the human body could not assume. In his

latest painting, that of the *Last Judgment* on the end wall of the Sistine, he poured out his soul like a torrent. What were laws in comparison with the pain within himself which must out? Well might the Italians of his day speak of the *terribilitá* of his style: that it was, terrible!

In a brief study of so great a man it is possible to allude to only one more feature of the picture — namely, its architectural details. These, real as they look, are painted on the level surface of the vault. It is characteristic of Michelangelo that, having this vast space to decorate, he should begin by subdividing it into architectural spaces, since he was architect as well as sculptor, painter, and poet. For a time the building of St. Peter's was intrusted to his care, and in the last years of his life he prepared plans for it and made a model of its wonderful dome. There was much dispute as to whether the ground-plan of the building should be of the design of a Greek or of a Roman cross. Bramante had urged the former and Michelangelo adhered to it, intending the dome to be its crowning feature. Unfortunately, in the beginning of the seventeenth century the nave was lengthened, and this change from the Greek to the Roman cross has interfered with the view of the dome from nearby and otherwise diminished its effect.

Michelangelo died in Rome, February 18, 1564, after dictating this brief will; "I commit my soul to God, my body to the earth, and my property to my nearest relations." His remains were conveyed to Florence, and given a public funeral in the Church of Santa Croce.

Compared with this long and arduous life, Correggio's seems simple indeed. Little is known of it, which would argue that he was of a retiring disposition. He was born in the little town of Correggio, twenty-four miles from Parma. In the latter city he was educated, but in his seventeenth year an outbreak of the plague drove his family to Mantua, where the young painter had an opportunity of studying the pictures of Mantegna and the collection of works of art accumulated originally by the Gonzaga family and later by Isabella d'Este. In 1514 he was back at Parma, where his talents met with ample recognition; and for some years the story of his life is the record of his work, culminating in that wonderful creation of light and shade, *The Adoration of the Shepherds,* now in the Dresden Gallery, and the

masterpiece of the Parma Gallery, *Madonna and Child with St. Jerome and the Magdalene.*

It was not, however, a record of undisturbed quiet, for the decoration which he made for the dome of the cathedral was severely criticized. Choosing the subject of the *Resurrection*, he projected upon the ceiling a great number of ascending figures, which, viewed from below, necessarily involved a multitude of legs, giving rise to the *bon mot* that the painting resembled a "fry of frogs." It may have been the trouble which now ensued with the chapter of the cathedral, or depression caused by the death of his young wife, but at the age of thirty-six, indifferent to fame and fortune, he retired to the comparative obscurity of his native place, where for four years he devoted himself to the painting of mythological subjects: scenes of fabled beings removed from the real world and set in a golden arcady of dreams. All that is known regarding his death is the date, March 5, 1534.

CHAPTER 11
Paolo Caliari / Jacopo Robusti

(called Veronese) (called Tintoretto)
1528-1588 1518-1594
Italian School of Venice / Italian School of Venice

The art of Venice, it has been said, "was late in its appearance, the last to come, the last to die, of all the great Italian schools." It reached its culmination in Titian, whom we have already considered, and in Paul Veronese and Tintoretto, his contemporaries. Most characteristically, perhaps, in the last two.

For the grandeur of Venetian art does not consist in its representation of the motives which exercised the other schools of Italian art. It was not saturated with the religious motive, or with the classical; nor intent on realistic representation. It combined something of each, but only as a means to its purpose of making art contributory to the joy and pageantry of life. While the searching spirit of the Renaissance was reflected in Da Vinci, its soul in Michelangelo, and the Christian faith and classical lore united in Raphael, the motive of the Venetians was the pride of life: pride particularly in the communal life of Venice, in her institutions, in her unsurpassed beauty, in her royal magnificence as the Queen City of the East and West.

Eleven hundred years before the birth of Paul Veronese, AD 421, a handful of Roman Christians, driven out of Aquileia by the Lombards, had taken refuge upon Torcello, one of the sandy islands amid the lagoons. In time they spread to other islands, Malamocco and Rivalto, from which they repelled an attack" made by Pepin, the son of Charlemagne, thus throwing off the yoke of the Eastern emperors. Rivalto was then selected as the seat of government; Venice was founded, and in AD 819 the doge took up his residence on the spot still occupied by the Ducal Palace. Nine years later a Venetian fleet brought from Alexandria the body of St. Mark; he was adopted as the city's patron saint; his emblem, the lion, became the symbol of the Venetian government; and a church was erected in his honor,

where now stands the great cathedral, adjoining the palace of the doges.

Henceforth these two structures became the embodiment of the city's spiritual and temporal life; the assertions of her proud independence and superb ambitions; the visible expressions of her strongly personal religion and intense patriotism. From the first she set her face to the sea, and by her geographical position became the entrance-port through which the wealth of the East poured into Europe. So, when she planned her great church of St. Mark's in the eleventh century, it was to Byzantium that she turned for craftsmen and artificers, and the edifice, which rose through this and the following centuries, was Oriental both in style and in the lavishness of its decoration. It came to be like a colossal casket, the outside and inside of which was being embellished continually with more precious and sumptuous display. Some architects will tell you it is a monstrosity, because it lacks the dignity of form, the harmony between the whole and its parts, that are essential to a great composition.

It is not, however, on the score of form that it challenges the admiration of the world, but as an example, the most superb in Europe, of applied decoration. Its exterior is incrusted with carven work, brilliant with gold, sumptuous with columns of most precious marbles: with costly marbles, also, its interior is veneered; its vaultings covered with glass mosaics, its windows filled with colored glass — the glass-work fabricated on the island of Murano, originally by Byzantine artists. The interior is a miracle of color, seen under every conceivable variety of lights and shadows; by turns gorgeous, tender, stupendous, or mysteriously lustrous, impregnated everywhere with an atmosphere of infinite subtlety. Not form, as I have said, but color, light and shade, and atmosphere; and these are the qualities that prevail in Venetian painting. They are a heritage from the Byzantine influence, reinspired continually by the waters and skies of Venice; and they were the only adequate means of representing pictorially the variegated opulence of Venetian life.

Let us glance for a moment at the growth of the power of Venice. In the thirteenth century — namely, 1204 — under her Doge Dandolo, she took Constantinople and planted her colonies on the shores of the peninsula of Greece and on the adjacent islands. During

the fourteenth century she waged war with her naval rival, Genoa, conquered her, and extended her own power over the neighboring cities of Vicenza, Verona, and Padua, until the whole district of Venezia was under her sway, while her colonies extended along the shores of the Adriatic and Mediterranean as far as Trebizond, on the northeast coast of Asia Minor. By the commencement of the fifteenth century her glory was in its zenith. The French ambassador, De Commynes, writing to his sovereign, describes Venice as the "most triumphant city I have ever seen, and one which does most honor to ambassadors and strangers; which is most wisely governed, and in which the service of God is most solemnly performed."

But the wave, having reached its summit, was already beginning to decline. In 1453 the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks began the undermining of the commerce of Venice with the Levant; and, following the voyage of Vasco da Gama round the Cape of Good Hope, the trade with India gradually passed into the hands of the Portuguese. Then, in 1508, the Pope, the German Emperor, and the King of France conspired against Venice in the League of Cambrai; and although she "remained herself untouched upon the waters of the Lagunes, she lost her possessions on the mainland"; while through the years which followed, almost single-handed, she held the Turks at bay. Yet it was in the long-drawn-out decline of her power that her art reached its supreme height. With Titian, whose long life bridged the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it is still magnificently poised; with Tintoretto and Paul Veronese, both of whom belonged entirely to the latter century, it is an art of display and some exaggeration.

Peculiarly characteristic of Venetian art was the pageant picture representing some great religious or state function redounding to the glory of Venice. The most beautiful city in the world, her own external life was a continual pageant, but on frequent occasions her canals and piazza were the scenes of officially regulated ceremonials. The arrival and departure of ambassadors were events of particular magnificence; the church's processions, such as those of Corpus Christi, were conducted with a splendor that was only surpassed in the great state pageant wherein Venice was annually wedded to the Adriatic.

The Doge's Palace, embodiment of her power as a state, under

the rule of its doge and Council of Ten, was five times damaged by fire, and after each catastrophe repaired with greater magnificence. In the fire of 1576 the paintings by Bellini, Alvise Vivarini, and Carpaccio which had adorned the interior were consumed; and those which now decorate its walls and ceilings are the work of the later artists, notably of Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese. With very few exceptions, the subjects of the pictures set forth the glory and power of Venice, which find their highest expression in the Hall of the Great Council, that body of one hundred nobles, nominally the government, but actually superseded by the inner Council of Ten. The walls are covered with large mural paintings, representing triumphal incidents of war and diplomacy. Around the frieze are portraits by Tintoretto of seventy-six doges, a black tablet with the inscription *Hic est locus Marini Falethri decapitati pro criminibus* hanging where should be the portrait of Doge Marino Faliero, a traitor to the terrible Council of Ten. The splendor of the whole culminates in the center of the eastern ceiling, in the *Glory of Venice* by Paul Veronese.

The illustration of it here reproduced should be held above the head, in order that the angle of vision may correspond with that at which the original is viewed. Then it becomes apparent with what wonderful skill the architecture and the figures have been made to conform to the conditions of seeing the picture. High up against the magnificent architectural setting, of that imposing kind with which the architect Palladio was delighting his contemporaries, between pillars of Oriental design, such as adorn the *Beautiful Gate of the Temple* in Raphael's cartoon of Peter and John curing the lame man, Venezia sits enthroned. She is robed in ermine and blue silk, gold embroidered, and above her fair-haired head a winged figure, poised in air, suspends a crown, while another, higher up upon a cloud, blows through a trumpet. Grouped at the foot of the throne, and resting upon clouds, are five female figures, symbolizing, from the right. Justice, Agriculture, Peace, Commerce, and Victory, and beside the last sits the male figure of a soldier, holding a branch of laurel. From a balcony beneath them men and women in beautiful attire look up with faces of radiant happiness and devotion, while down below, two horsemen appear among a crowd of persons.

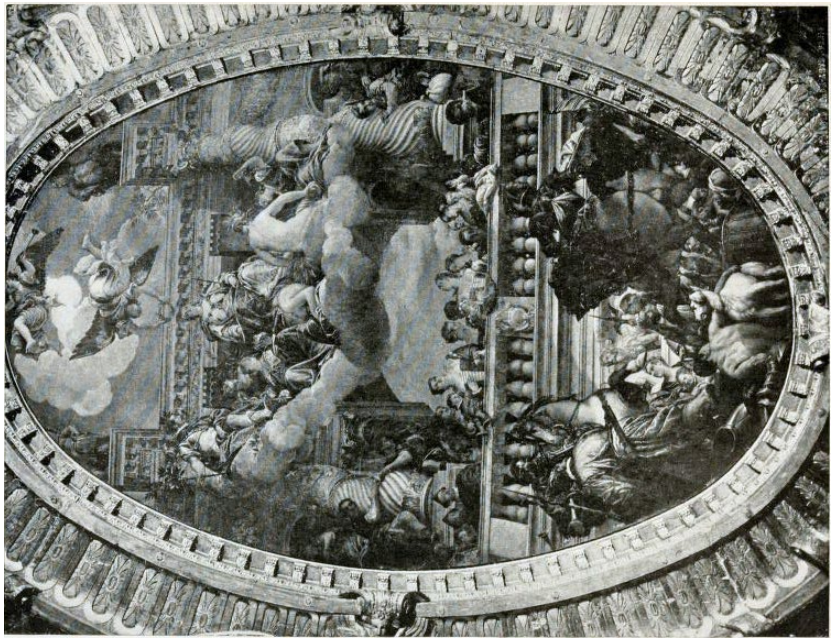
"This picture," writes the artist E. H. Blashfield, "is so rich and so

silvery in its color" — the latter appearing in the architectural parts — "that it may be called magnificent in its technic as in its motive. As a subject, it is exactly what Veronese loved best to treat, and among his works only *The Marriage at Cana* and *The Family of Darius* can rival it… No picture shows a more masterly arrangement: a style at once so sumptuous yet elevated, figures whose somewhat exuberant loveliness is saved from vulgarity by an air of pride and energy, magnificent material treated with such ease and sincerity.

We should particularly remark the last words, "ease and sincerity." As to the ease of Veronese, I quote from various sources: "His facility of execution has never been equaled." "Every one of his canvases, replete with life and movement, is a feast for the eye." "Veronese was supreme in representing, without huddling or confusion, numerous figures in a luminous and diffused atmosphere, while in richness of draperies and transparency of shadows he surpassed all other Venetians or Italians." "He is of all painters, without a single exception, the one whose work shows most unity."

As to his sincerity, it arose from the fact that he was simply what he was — a painter. He does not appeal to our intelligence, as Titian, or to our sense of dramatic poetry, as Tintoretto. His is the Kingdom of the World, the pride of strong and beautiful bodies, the splendor of external appearances; and he gave himself to it with the single purpose of representing what appealed to the eye. "Joyous, free, proud, full of health and vigor, Veronese is the very incarnation of the Italian Renaissance, that happy time when under smiling and propitious skies painters produced works of art with as little effort as trees put forth their blossoms and bear their fruit."

"These being the prominent features of his style, it remains to be said that what is really great in Veronese is the sobriety of his imagination and the solidity of his workmanship. Amid so much that is distracting, he never loses command over his subject, nor does he degenerate into fulsome rhetoric." In the exuberance of his fancy and the facility of his brush, moreover in the skill with which he "places crowds of figures in an atmospheric envelope, bathing them, so to speak, in light," he resembles Rubens. "But he does not, like Rubens, strike us as gross, sensual, fleshly; he remains proud, powerful, and frigidly materialistic. He raises neither repulsion nor desire, but





Top: The Glory of Venice, Paolo Veronese
Bottom: The Miracle of Mark, Tintoretto

displays with the calm strength of art the empire of the mundane spirit." Equally in this quality of sober restraint he differs from Tintoretto. "Where Tintoretto is dramatic, Veronese is scenic."

This distinction is well worth analyzing. It may seem for a moment as if the two ideas were identical; but "scenic" has to do with the things apparent to the eye, "dramatic" with the unseen workings of the mind, as expressed in word or gesture. A pageant is scenic; but the attempt to reproduce the thought, which moves each individual to separate expression of his feelings, would bring it into the category of dramatic. The distinction is made clear by a comparison of the *Glory of Venice* with Tintoretto's *Miracle of St. Mark.* We feel a desire to know the story represented in the latter. This in itself is to admit a difference. Veronese being, as I have said, simply what he was — a painter — needs no commentary. The purport of his picture is at once self-evident. You will be told by some that this self-evidentness is the proper scope of painting; that "art for art's sake" should be the sole object of the painter; that the representation of anything else but what is apparent to the eye is going outside the province of the art; and that the preference which so many people have for a picture which makes an appeal not only to the eye, but to the intellect or the poetic and dramatic sense, is a proof of vulgar taste which confuses painting with illustration. The best answer to this is that not alone laymen, but artists also in all periods — artists of such personality that they cannot be ignored — have tried to reinforce the grandeur of mere appearances with something that shall appeal to the mind and soul of men.

Tintoretto was one of them; not by overt intention, but because the poetic and dramatic fervor was in him and it had to find utterance. The points of main importance are the value of the story that he represents and his manner of representing it. Now, to the Venetians, any incident connected with their patron saint was of extreme interest, recognized at once and enjoyed. The one pictured here has reference to the legend, that a Christian slave of a pagan nobleman had persisted in worshiping at the shrine of St. Mark; whereupon his master haled him before the judge, who condemned him to be tortured. But as the executioner raised his hammer, St. Mark himself descended from heaven and the weapon was shattered.

We see the saint, hovering above the crowd; the executioner in his turban, turning to the judge to show the broken hammer; the judge leaning forward in his seat, and the various individuals in the crowd pressing round with different expressions of amazement. Following a custom of the time, Tintoretto has introduced the portrait of himself three times: in the bearded man who leans forward between the columns on the left, in the figure immediately to the right of the executioner, and again in the face that appears beneath the judge on the extreme right of the picture. No Venetian of Tintoretto's time could be unresponsive to such a theme, so realized; any more than an American of to-day could fail to be impressed, were there an artist capable of representing some incident in the life of Washington in such a way as to involve all that the idea of Washington presents to the American imagination.

Now as to the manner of presentment: Tintoretto, when a youth, wrote upon the wall of his studio as an ideal to be reached: "The drawing of Michelangelo, the coloring of Titian." His father being a dyer of silk (*tintore*), the lad at first assisted in the work, hence his nickname, "Il Tintoretto," "The Little Dyer." However, as he showed an aptitude for drawing and painting, the father obtained permission for him to work in Titian's studio; but for some reason his stay with the great master lasted only a few days. For the rest, he was his own teacher, studying and copying the works of Titian in the churches and palaces; and, having obtained casts of Michelangelo's figures upon the Medicean tombs, drawing them from every possible point of view. It is said that he also made little figures in clay, and suspended them by a string from the rafters in his studio, that he might learn how to represent them in mid-air, and as they appeared when viewed from underneath.

It was very difficult even in Venice for a young untried painter to obtain recognition; but at last an opportunity occurred. In the Church of Santa Maria del Orto there were two bare spaces nearly fifty feet high and twenty broad; he offered to paint them for nothing but the price of the materials; and, the offer being accepted, produced *The Last Judgment* and *The Golden Calf*. He was now about twenty-eight years old. So great was the impression produced by these works that he was shortly after invited to paint four pictures for the Scuola

di San Rocco, one of which was the picture we are studying. There were many of these schools in. Venice, and they vied with one another in securing the services of painters to decorate their walls. The brothers of the Confraternity of San Rocco gave Tintoretto a commission for two pictures in their church, and then invited him to enter a competition with Veronese and others for the decoration of the ceiling in the hall of their school. When the day arrived, the other painters presented their sketches, but Tintoretto, being asked for his, removed a screen from the ceiling and showed it already painted. "We asked for sketches," they said. "That is the way," he replied, "I make my sketches." They still demurred, so he made them a present of the picture, and by the rules of their order they could not refuse a gift. In the end they promised him the painting of all the pictures they required, and during his lifetime he covered their walls with sixty large compositions. After the fire of 1577 in the Ducal Palace he shared with Veronese the larger part of the new decorations.

Among his pictures there is the *Marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne,* described by John Addington Symonds as "that perfect lyric of the sensuous fancy"; with which the same writer couples his *Martyrdom of St. Agnes,* "that lamb-like maiden with her snow-white lamb among the soldiers and priests of Rome," as an illustration "that it is not only in the region of the vast, the tempestuous, and the tragic, that Tintoretto finds himself at home; but that he has proved beyond all question that the fiery genius of Titanic artists can pierce and irradiate the placid and the tender secrets of the soul, with more consummate mastery than falls to the lot of those who make tranquillity their special province.

Yet it is his phenomenal energy and the impetuous force of his work that are particularly characteristic of Tintoretto and earned for him the sobriquet among his contemporaries, "Il Furioso." He painted so many pictures, and on so vast a scale, that some show the effects of over-haste and extravagance, which caused Annibale Carracci to say that, "while Tintoretto was the equal of Titian, he was often inferior to Tintoretto."

But the *Miracle of St. Mark* is one of his grandest pictures; admirable alike in the dramatic movement of the figures, the beauty of the coloring, and the emotional use that has been made of light and

shadow. If we compare it with Veronese's we shall discover the difference between the dramatic and the scenic. The figures in the latter have a sumptuous repose, finely adjusted to the general strain of triumph that resounds from the whole picture; but in Tintoretto's the wonderfully foreshortened body of St. Mark plunges through the air with the impetuosity of an eagle. "There is not a figure in the picture that does not act, and act all over; not a fold of drapery nor a tone of flesh that does not add to the universal dash and brilliancy." The coloring of the costumes includes saffron, blue, gold, and deep crimson; the sky is of greenish hue passing to a golden haze over the horizon; while the body of the slave is a center of luminousness. For the chief characteristic of the picture is Tintoretto's use of light and shade.

He uses it with dramatic and emotional effect; "with him," as has been said, "it is the first and most powerful of dramatic accessories; he makes light an actor in his vast compositions." We shall see how Rubens, fresh from Italy, used light and shadow in this emotional way in his *Descent from the Cross*; but usually, like Veronese, he enveloped his figures in clear full light; while Tintoretto makes his emerge into light from darkness. Some of his pictures, whether from effects of time or the manner of their painting, are to-day black and coarse-looking; but in the best and well-preserved ones, as in our present example, the shadows themselves are luminous with color.

While his life was a tranquil one, spent for the most part in his studio, his mind teemed with ideas; his conceptions came to him in lightning bursts of inspiration, the whole scene vividly clear; rapidly and without hesitation transferred to the canvas. Hence some of his work is exaggerated in force and confused in composition. Such, at least in its present condition, is the vast canvas of *Paradise* in the Ducal Palace, the largest oil-painting in the world, measuring thirty by seventy-four feet, upon which he painted during the last six years of his life. He lies buried in Santa Maria del Orto, the church in which his first important work was done forty-eight years before. Veronese, the younger man, had been dead six years.

With these men died the last of the giants of the Italian Renaissance. That mighty movement had run its course, and was succeeded by decline. The vital force of painting now reappeared in other lands.

CHAPTER 12

Peter Paul Rubens / Diego Rodriguez De Silva Velasquez

1577 – 1640	1599 – 1660
Flemish School	Spanish School

The student of art, when he reaches the period of the seventeenth century, turns a sharp corner. He has been traveling for three centuries in Italy, with brief visits at long intervals to Flanders and Germany, the second of his trips to the latter including a visit to England. But, as he turns the corner of the seventeenth century, Italy is left behind, Spain attracts his attention to the west, while far to the north Holland and, a second time, Flanders beckon him.

For in Italy the last of the great artists passed away with Tintoretto. The country itself had become the prey of despots who were in the hire of foreign rulers; and the loss of political liberty was accompanied by lower social standards, by intellectual and artistic decline. There were still clever painters, but they were little men, without originality, content to reproduce the manner of their great predecessors; copying chiefly their weaknesses; trying by extravagances to disguise the absence of originality in themselves.

At this period, to find something vital in art — something, that is to say, that grows and ripens because of the independent force of life within itself — we must turn to Spain and to the North. Immediately three of the greatest names in art rise to our notice: Rembrandt, Rubens, and Velasquez. It is with the last two that we are concerned at present.

The pictures selected as a basis for the study of these two giants are *The Descent from the Cross* by Rubens and *The Maids of Honor* (*Las Meñinas* in the Spanish) by Velasquez. The former was painted when Rubens was thirty-five. He had completed his education by a sojourn of eight years in Italy, where, in the service of the Duke of Nantua, he had had special opportunities of study, being employed during part of the time in making copies of masterpieces for his

patron.

He was now returned to Antwerp, and one of the first works in which he declared himself to be a master was *The Descent from the Cross*. It shows him to be under the Italian influence, and not yet the original artist that he became. *The Maids of Honor*, on the contrary, was painted by Velasquez only four years before he died, and represents the finest flower of his maturity.

Possibly our first impression of the Rubens picture will be, "How beautiful!" — of the Velasquez, "How curious!" In the one case the figures almost fill the canvas and are grouped so as to decorate it with an imposing mass of light and shade and a beautiful arrangement of lines; whereas in the other the figures are all at the bottom of the canvas, and do not present a similarly beautiful pattern of lines and masses. The one looks like a magnificent picture; the other seems to be rather a real scene, as indeed it was.

The story of has Meninas is that Velasquez was painting a portrait of the king and queen, who sat where the spectator is as he looks at the picture, and their little daughter, the infanta Margarita, came in with her maids of honor, her dog, and her dwarfs, accompanied by her duenna and a courtier. The little princess asks for a drink of water; the maids of honor hand it to her with the elaborate etiquette prescribed by the formalities of the most rigidly ceremonious court in Europe. The scene presented so charming a picture, that the king desired Velasquez to paint it. The artist has included himself in the group at work upon a large canvas, on which it is supposed he was painting the portraits of the king and queen when the interruption occurred. Their reflection appears in the mirror at the end of the room, and the chamberlain, Don Jose Nieto, stands outside the door, drawing a curtain. The scene is indeed represented with such extraordinary realism that the French critic Gautier writes, "So complete is the illusion that, standing in front of *Las Meninas*, one is tempted to ask, 'Where is the picture?'"

It is the mature work of a painter whose motto was, "Verdad no pintura" ("Truth, not painting"). By comparison, the principle which Rubens followed is "Painting and truth." Let us see how the two ideas are illustrated in the respective pictures.

The Descent from the Cross arouses one's feeling of awe and pity

to an extraordinary degree. This is partly due to the actual moment in the great tragedy of the Redemption which the artist has seized. The terrible anguish of the Crucifixion is past; to it has succeeded the pathetic nothingness of death; the poor, limp body is being tenderly cared for by the faithful few who have come, under the cover of night, to render the last office to the Dead. Joseph of Arimathasa is superintending the lowering of the precious burden; young John, the beloved disciple, supports its weight; Peter has mounted the ladder with characteristic eagerness, but the memory of his denial is with him, and, fixed in contemplation of the divine face, he lends no hand; and the three Marys are there, the one stretching out her arms with a mother's yearning for embrace, the Magdalene grasping the foot that she had once bathed with her tears. Each attendant figure, though so different in its individual expression of feeling, joins with the others to complete a unity of deepest reverential tenderness. Then in contrast to these strong forms, so full of life and feeling, is the relaxed, nerveless body of the Dead. I wonder if ever the pitiful helplessness of death, or the reverent awe that the living feel in the presence of their beloved dead, has been more beautifully expressed.

Let us try to discover by what actual resources of the painter's art Rubens has achieved this result. We have mentioned the contrast between the bodies of the Dead and the living figures. It is an illustration of the painter's power to stimulate what has been called the "tactile imagination"; that is to say, to suggest the physical sense of touch and the feelings in the mind aroused by it. A lesser artist might have conceived this way of presenting the scene and drawn all the figures in the same positions, making, in fact, the same appeal to our eye, and yet not affected us in the same way, because he would make no appeal to that other sense of touch, which really in most people is the more easily roused. For people more readily appreciate hard and soft, rough and smooth, stiff and limp, hot and cold, than the colors and shapes and grouping of objects. It is this sense of touch which Rubens had so wonderful a skill in suggesting. Look, for example, at the modeling of the shoulders and head of Peter. What strength and bulk and sudden tightening of the muscles, as he turns and holds himself still! The line of the shoulders and the direction of the eyes point us to the Saviour's head. It has dropped of its own

weight, as the hand of the man above let go of it. The left arm is still grasped by the other man — at the elbow, observe, so that his hand not only helps to sustain the weight of the body, but keeps the forearm stiff. We feel that, when he lets go, it too will fall lifelessly. Compare also the huddled, actionless position of the Saviour's form with the strong body of John, braced so firmly by the legs. So, one by one, we might examine the figures, feeling in our imagination the physical firmness and muscular movement that each would present to the touch, coming back again and again to the feeling. How limp and flaccid is the dead body!

This last feeling might produce in us either disgust or pity. Rubens has insured the latter, partly by depicting in the living figures a reverence and tenderness in which we instantly participate; also, by the persuasive beauty of the composition.

Let us study the latter, first in its arrangement of line, secondly in its arrangement of light and shade, though the two are really blended. Every figure in the composition has either the beauty of grace or that of character; and the most beautiful is the Saviour's, which has the elongated, pliant grace of the stem and tendrils of a vine. And the drooping flower upon it is the head, to which all the principal lines of the composition lead. Start where you will and follow along the direction of the figures, your eye finally centers upon the Saviour's head. It is the focus-point. And note that on the edges of the group the lines begin by being firm and strong in character, gradually increasing in suppleness and grace as they draw near the sacred figure, until finally all the dignity and sweetness of the picture come to an intensity in the Head. Lest the central figure should be lacking in impressiveness as a mass, its effect has been broadened by the winding-sheet, against the opaque white of which its own whiteness of flesh is limpid and ashy in tone. Apart from the flesh-tints, the other hues in the picture are black, almost black-green, and dull red. Thus by its color as well as by the lines the figure of the Saviour is made the prominent spot in the composition. Moreover, placed as it is upon the most brilliantly lighted part of the picture, its own tenderer lighting is made more emphatic.

The figure is being lowered, as it were, down a cataract of light which leaps up in a wave at the bottom, and scatters flakes of foam

around it. These alight on the faces, hands, and sometimes on an arm or foot, in every case just those parts of the composition which are important in the expression of gesture or sentiment.

In this distribution of light, as well as in the arrangement of the lines, there has been a careful building up of effect, everything calculated to arouse the emotion and make at once a magnificent spectacle and a profound impression. Painted as an altarpiece to be viewed from a distance, it is an example of the "grand style," belonging to that "high-bred" family of pictures represented most nobly in Italian art. Compared with it, *The Maids of Honor* may appear to have little grandeur.

While the Rubens presents a beautiful pattern of decoration, the Velasquez seems barren, more than half the canvas being given up to empty space. The figures in the former have a grand flow of line, those in the latter seem stiff and awkwardly grouped. The Rubens excites our emotion, the Velasquez our curiosity.

Before studying closely *The Maids of Honor*, we must recall the fact that in 1628 Rubens visited the court of Spain for nine months; that Velasquez watched him paint and came under the fascination of his personality; that he saw Rubens's admiration for the great Italian pictures which hung in the king's gallery; that by the advice of Rubens he shortly after ward visited Italy, and studied in Venice, Milan, and Rome. In fact, Velasquez was well acquainted with the grandeur of Italian painting; and in the middle period of his life, between 1645 and 1648, had an opportunity to execute a grand example of decorative painting. The king commissioned him to decorate the walls of the new summer palace, Buen Retiro, whereupon Velasquez painted the famous *Surrender of Breda*. It represents Justin of Nassau handing the keys of the city to his conqueror, Spinola, the last of the great Spanish generals. It is a noble decoration and at the same time one of the finest historical paintings in the world, contradicting the assertion made by some painters that the two ideas are incompatible.

Some years before it was painted Rubens had completed a series of historical decorations, which are now in the Louvre, to celebrate events in the life of Marie de Medicis, queen of Henri IV of France, and mother of Louis XIII. Here again is shown the difference between

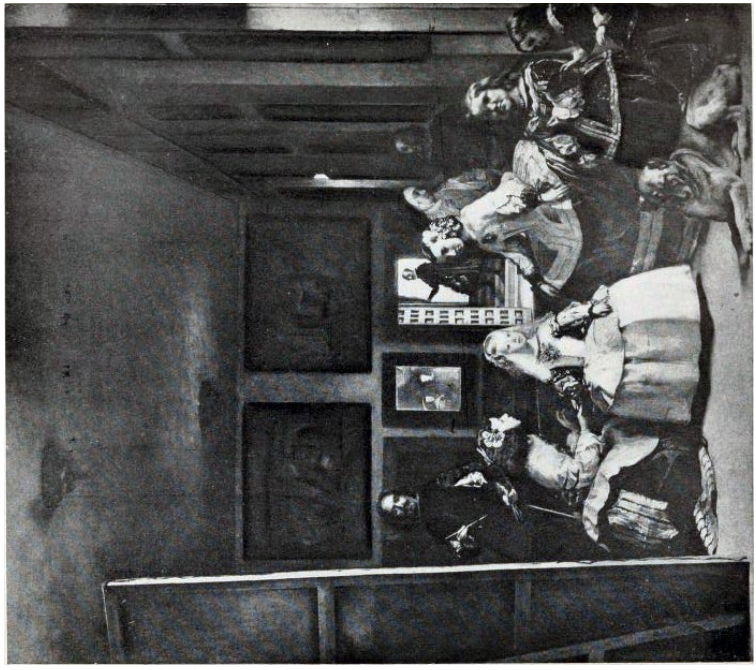
Rubens and Velasquez; for these pictures by Rubens present a blaze of color, a profusion of sumptuousness, a pageant of imagination in which gods and goddesses and allegorical figures mingle with the actual personages. Velasquez, on the contrary, while keeping in mind the decorative necessities of the canvas, kept himself also to the simple and very touching circumstances of the incident. Even in the enthusiasm of painting a great decoration, he preserved his regard for "truth."

So it was not because of ignorance of what other great painters had done, or of what he himself could do to rival them on their own ground — for *The Surrender of Breda* could hang without loss of dignity beside a Titian —that he turned his back upon all traditions of the Italian grand style, and in the years of his maturity produced *The Maids of Honor*, a new kind of picture. It was new because it was the product of a new kind of artist's eyesight; of a new conception of realism.

We have seen in Holbein's *Portrait of Georg Gyze* an example of that kind of realism which is solely occupied in giving a faithful representation of the figure and its surrounding objects. But if you compare that portrait with Velasquez's picture, you will feel, I think, that the attention is scattered over Holbein's picture, while in the case of Velasquez's the eye immediately takes it in as a whole. The little princess is the center of the scene, the light being concentrated on her, as it is around the principal figure in Rubens's picture; but, though our attention is centered on the child, it revolves all round her and immediately embraces the scene as a whole. The realism of this picture is a realism of unity. Moreover, it gives us a single vivid impression of the scene, such as the king received; so we may call it also a realism of impression.

To illustrate what is meant by realism of impression let us contrast an example of the extreme opposite: *1807 — Friedland*, by Meissonier, in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. It is not necessary to have seen it to appreciate the difference; enough to know that it represents a regiment of cavalry galloping past Napoleon, saluting him as they charge the enemy; and that the armor and weapons and accoutrements of all these men are painted with the finish and exactness of a miniature. No eye in the world could have seen the bridles





Top: Descent from the Cross, Rubens
Bottom: Las Meñinas (The Maids of Honor), Velasquez

and bits and spurs and buttons, and the thousand other sharply defined details, as those soldiers galloped by. While each detail represents realism, their sum total is, from the point of view of the painter or of the spectator, false. The reason is that Meissonier has painted, not what he could see, but what his mind informed him must be there.[17] And what is the result? The picture does not affect us as a whole; but people study over it, moving their eyes, as if from word to word or from line to line on the page of a book; and then, because every item looks so real, they exclaim, "How wonderful!"

Velasquez's picture, on the other hand, makes an instant and complete impression, because he has included in it only as much of detail as the eye could embrace at one glance; more, however, than a less gifted and an untrained vision could encompass. But it was Velasquez's distinction that he had a marvelous power of receiving a full impression and of vividly retaining it in his mind until he had rendered it vivid upon the canvas.

If we turn back again to a comparison of *The Descent from the Cross* and *The Maids of Honor*, do we not realize a much more instantaneous and vivid impression in the Velasquez? The Rubens, also, is a noble example of unity, but it is a unity of effect produced chiefly by the balance of the dark and light parts; yet the method adopted is arbitrary, as compared with the Velasquez. To state it briefly: Rubens has put the light where he needed it for his composition; Velasquez has taken it as he found it. Streaming through the window, it permeates the whole room, not striking the figures simply on one side and leaving the other dark, but enveloping them and penetrating to the remotest corners of the ceiling. Even in the reproductions, you can see how much more real the light is in the Velasquez; how it is bright on the parts of the figures that lie in its direct path; less bright in the half-lights, where it strikes the figure less directly; reflected back, as for example from the dress of the little princess on to that of the maid on her left; how it steals round everything and penetrates everywhere. For Velasquez recognized that light is elastic and illuminates the air. Also he noticed that the light was whiter on objects near the eye, grayer and grayer on objects farther and farther back,

[17] See the chapter on Memling.

owing to the intervening planes of atmosphere hanging between like veils.

Hence he was the first to discover a new kind of perspective. Men long ago had learned to make the lines vanish from the eye; to make the figures diminish in size and shape as they recede from the front; and to explain the distance by contrasts of light and shade. But he perfected what had been anticipated by Leonardo — the perspective of light. By the most delicate and accurate rendering of the quantity of light reflected from each and every part of the room and the figures and objects in it, and by recognizing the veils of atmosphere, he gave to the figures the reality of form and to the room its hollowness and distance.

Painters distinguish between the color of an object and its color as acted upon by light. Thus, in the case of a white dress, they would say that white was its "local color." But it is not white like a sheet of paper; it varies in degrees of whiteness according to the quantity of light reflected from its various parts. And these varying quantities of light reflected from the various planes of the objects, they call "values." Velasquez excelled in the rendering of "values."

This attention to values, or the truthful rendering of light, involved other truths: for example, that the outlines of objects are not, except in special cases, sharply defined — the light plays round their edges and thereby softens and melts them; and the objects themselves do not appear as if they were cut out in paper and pasted on the canvas, but are masses of more or less illuminated color, merged in the surrounding atmosphere. Consequently, Velasquez gave to the contour-lines of his figures an elusiveness; sometimes they are strong and assertive, at other times they melt into the atmosphere. And as light shows itself to our eyes by being reflected from the infinite molecules of the air, so Velasquez's rendering of light introduced an appearance of real atmosphere into his pictures. You have only to compare this one of his with Rubens's to be sure this is so.

Having thus briefly (and therefore inadequately, I am afraid; for it is a large and difficult subject) glanced at the things that Velasquez tried for, we are in a better position to understand how his realism was a realism of impression. Firstly, he saw his subject at a single glance, eye and hand instantaneously cooperating; and he confined

his impression to what a less keen eye, assisted by him, could also take in as a single impression. Secondly, by his marvelous penetration into the action of light, and his skill in rendering it, he set upon the canvas the scene as he had received the impression of it, with such subtle fidelity that our own observation is stimulated, and we receive the impression vividly.

By this time the picture should no longer appear to be empty; nor the figures crowded at the bottom. We should feel that the background and ceiling are connected, by that vertical strip of light up the edge of the canvas, with the figures in the foreground, so as to make a unified composition of balanced masses of light and less light. In the wonderful truth to life of the figures — the exquisite daintiness of the little princess, the affectionate reverence of the maids, the grotesqueness of the dwarfs, and the courtly sensitiveness of the artist's figure — we should have entered into the intimate human feeling of the whole group and ceased to be troubled by the curious style of the costumes.

These costumes, more than likely, and the fact that Velasquez lived in the palace painting courtly scenes and portraits, had much to do with his striking out a new style. How could he introduce such hooped skirts into a picture in the grand manner of Italian painting? His great genius was therefore compelled to find another outlet, and did so in directions which were new and permanent additions to the art of painting.

Rubens, on the other hand, not less original, took from the Italian style what could be of use to him, and then built upon it a style of his own. It is distinguished by a wonderful mastery of the human form and an amazing wealth of splendidly lighted color. He was a man of as much intellectual poise as Velasquez, and, like the latter, was accustomed to court life. But while Velasquez, bound to the most punctilious, ascetic, and superstitious court in Europe, was driven in upon himself, and became more and more acutely sensitive — Rubens, traveling from court to court with pomp as a trusted envoy, had the exuberance of his nature more and more developed. As an artist, he had the wonderful faculty of being habitually in a white heat of imagination, while perfectly cool and calculating in the control of his hand. Hence the enormous output of his brush. It might be said

that he was as prolific in the representation of the joy and exuberance of life as Michelangelo was in the representation of the life of the emotions.

Velasquez, for nearly two centuries, was forgotten outside of Spain. Italian art continued to be the model to imitate; and even when a return to the truth of nature was made at the beginning of the nineteenth century, sixty years passed before this great example of "Truth, not painting" was "discovered." Then a few painters visited the museum of the Prado at Madrid, which contains most of his pictures; others followed, and the world became gradually conscious that in these pictures of Velasquez, especially in the wonderful series of portraits of the king and members of the court, which he made during forty years of royal intimacy, there was revealed a great and solitary genius. Since then he has exercised, as we shall see, such an influence upon modern painting that he has been called "the First of the Moderns."

CHAPTER 13
Antony Van Dyck / Franz Hals

1599 – 1641	1584(?) – 1666
Flemish School	Dutch School

The commencement of the seventeenth century witnessed the birth of a new nation and of a new art — the Dutch. When the emperor Charles V abdicated in 1555, he allotted Austria and Germany to Ferdinand I, Spain and the Netherlands to his son Philip II. The rule of Spain was in one way beneficial to the Netherlands, or Low Countries (Holland and Belgium), since it opened to them the trade with the New World and the West Indies. Antwerp rose to greatness. "No city except Paris," says Mr. Motley, "surpassed it in population or in commercial splendor. The city itself was the most beautiful in Europe. Placed upon a plain along the bank of the Scheldt, shaped like a bent bow with the river for its string, it inclosed within its walls some of the most splendid edifices in Christendom. The world-renowned Church of Notre Dame, the stately Exchange, where five thousand merchants daily congregated — prototype of all similar establishments throughout the world — the capacious mole and port — were all establishments which it would have been difficult to rival in any other part of the globe."

Such it was before the "Spanish Fury." In 1567 the Duke of Alva arrived with ten thousand veterans for the purpose of stamping out the Reformed faith; established his "Council of Blood"; beheaded the Counts of Egmont and Horn after a mock trial; and commenced a reign of terror and bloodshed. In the six years of his governorship he boasted that he had put to death eighteen thousand persons besides those killed in battle; for the people had risen under William the Silent, and the war for independence was begun. In 1579, by an agreement at Utrecht, the seven northern provinces united for mutual defense; the southern holding back, because they adhered to the Roman Catholic form of faith. Antwerp, however, though not in

the League of United Provinces, became a focus-point of the struggle, and in 1585 capitulated to the Duke of Parma.

Thirty-one years later the English ambassador paid a visit to the place, and wrote home to a friend:

> This great city is a great desert, for in ye whole time we spent there I could never sett my eyes in the whole length of the streete uppon 40 persons at once; I never mett coach nor saw man on horseback; none of our own companie (though both were workie dayes) saw one pennieworth of ware either in shops or in streetes bought or solde. Two walking pedlars and one ballad-seller will carry as much on their backs at once, as was in that royall exchange either above or below, — and the whole countrey of Brabant was suitable to this towne; faire and miserable.

When Philip II died in 1598, Spain was exhausted almost to prostration, and his successor was glad to conclude an armistice of twelve years with the United Provinces. But at its conclusion war was resumed, and it was not until 1648 that by the peace of Westphalia the independence of the northern provinces of Holland was finally assured.

Meanwhile, during those seventy years of conflict in which a new nation was in the forming, a new art had been born. While the northern provinces were fighting for their liberties, a number of painters came to manhood, whose work was of such originality as to constitute a new school of painting — the Dutch School; "the last," as Fromentin says, "of the great schools, perhaps the most original, certainly the most local."

It was original because it was local. Across the Scheldt in Antwerp, Rubens was in the prime of his powers (among his retinue of pupils was Van Dyck); but, though his fame must have crossed to the Dutch, his influence did not. That people, stubborn against foreign domination, was stubbornly fashioning a kind of art of its own. Its artists were independent of Rubens, of the great Italian traditions, of everything but what concerned themselves. By their religious views they were separated from the chance of painting altarpieces or mythological subjects, and by their revolt they were cut off from viceregal

patronage, such as the Flemish enjoyed. A nation of burghers, busy with war and commerce, they developed, out of their own lives, their love of country, and pride in themselves, a new art.

In one word, the Dutch art was an art of portraiture. It began with the painting of portraits of persons, and then proceeded to the painting of landscapes and of the outdoor and indoor occupations of the people, and to the painting of still-life — all with such simple intention to represent the things as they appeared, and with such fidelity to the truth, that the whole range of subjects may be classed as portraiture. It was not "grand art," but it was intimate and sincere.

The first of the great men, chronologically, was Franz Hals, whose *Portrait of a Woman* we are comparing with Van Dyck's *Marie Louise von Tassis.* There is a story related by Houbraken, which may or may not be true, that Van Dyck passing through Haarlem, where Hals lived,[18] desired to see the painter; but, though he called several times, he could not find him at home. So he sent a messenger to seek him out and tell him that a stranger wished to see him; and, on Hals putting in an appearance, asked him to paint his portrait, adding, however, that he had only two hours to spare for the sitting. Hals finished the portrait in that time; whereupon his sitter, observing that it seemed an easy matter to paint a portrait, requested that he be allowed to try and paint the artist. Hals soon recognized that "his visitor was well skilled in the materials he was using; great, however, was his surprise when he beheld the performance; he immediately embraced the stranger, at the same time crying out, 'You are Van Dyck; no person but he could do as you have now done.'"

Assuming the story to be true, how interesting it would be if the two portraits existed, that one might see what Franz Hals, accustomed to the heavier type of the Dutch burghers, made of the delicately refined features of Van Dyck, and how the latter, who always gave an air of aristocratic elegance to his portraits, acquitted himself with the bluff, jovial Hals, who was as much at home in a tavern as in a studio! For no two men could be more different, both in point of view and method, though they were alike in one particular, that each

[18] He was born in Antwerp, whither his family moved for a time in consequence of the war. They seem to have returned to Haarlem about 1607.

was a most facile and skilful painter.

Let us turn to the two portraits, which are very characteristic examples of these two masters. First of all, examine the hands. You have recognized, no doubt, that hands are very expressive of character. In good portraits there is always a correspondence of feeling and character between the hands and the head. Hals was a master in this respect. There is also an absolute unanimity between the expression of the hand and that of the face in the Van Dyck, even to the curl of the forefinger, which echoes with extraordinary subtlety the curious slanting glance of the eyes.

But when we learn that this artist kept servants in his employment whose hands he used as models for the hands of his sitters, we begin to wonder where this idealizing of nature stopped, and whether the face and carriage of the figure also may not have come in for a share of it. As we know, too, that it was his habit to make a rapid study of his sitters in black and white chalk upon gray paper, and to hand it to his assistants for them to paint the figure in its clothes, which were sent to the studio for that purpose, after which he retouched their work and painted in the head and hands, we feel a suspicion that Van Dyck was as much interested in illustrating his own ideas of elegance and refinement as in reproducing the actual characteristics of his sitters.

We shall hardly feel this in the *Portrait of a Woman* by Hals. Of the fact that the woman looked in the flesh just as he has represented her on the canvas, we are as sure, as if we had looked over his shoulder and watched her grow to shape beneath his brush. He has put in nothing but what he saw, left out nothing that could complete the veracity of the record.

We turn back to the Van Dyck, and have ceased to wonder if Marie Louise were really like this. Her portrait is an exquisitely beautiful picture — let it go at that; and then again we turn to the Hals, and again we have forgotten that it is a portrait. It is a real woman that we face, one of stout and wholesome stock, whose husband may have had a hand in the shaping of the new republic, who may have been the mother of sons who fought in the long struggle for freedom. Those hands! — one loves them; strong hands, coarsened by their share in the work of life, now folded so unaffectedly in the calm and

peace of living, which right good doing has won. When you look at them, and, still more, when you read their fuller story in that high, broad forehead, with the strong, big skull beneath it, as indicative of steadiness of purpose as the wide-apart eyes; in that resolute nose, with its lift of energy in the nostril; and in the firm, kindly, wise mouth, you realize how it was that Holland, having by its energy and patience set a barrier to the ocean, could keep at bay the power of Spain, and achieve for itself, after long waiting, liberty of life and thought.

This portrait, while self-sufficient as a record of a woman who actually lived, is more than that: it is a type of the race to which she belonged. It is a type, too, of the whole school of Dutch painting; so straightforward, intimate, and sincere. Moreover, such a marvel of painting!

The Dutchmen of the seventeenth century, having abandoned the large field of decorative composition, settled down in the small space of their canvases to a perfection of craftsmanship that has never been surpassed in modern art. From the standpoint of pure painting, they formed a school of great painters; differing among themselves in motives and manner, but alike in being consummate masters of the brush.

Hals set his figures in clear light, so that the modeling is not accomplished by shadows, but by the degree of light which each surface of the flesh or costume reflected. In this respect he worked like Velasquez, but in a broader way. He distributed the lights and painted in the colors in great masses, each mass containing its exact quantity of light; and so great was his skill in the rendering of values that he could make a flat tone give the suggestion of modeling. Thus in the almost uninterrupted flat white tone of this woman's ruff we do not miss the absence of many lines to indicate the folds of muslin.

Compare the treatment of the ruff in Van Dyck's portrait; indeed, the explicit way in which the whole of the elaborate costume is rendered. Nothing is left to the imagination. Everything is told with rhetorical elaboration. The contrast of the Hals portrait offers an instructive example of what painters mean by the word "breadth," and a lesson also in the effect of breadth on our imagination; for we get from the broad simplicity of this portrait a strong invigoration,





Top: Marie Louise Von Tassis, Antony Von Dyck
Bottom: Portrait of a Woman, Frans Hals

whereas from Van Dyck's a pleasant intoxication. Yet, while we miss the breadth in the Van Dyck, do not let us overlook the freedom with which it is painted, so that there is nothing small or niggling in all these details; they are drawn together, like the drops of water of a fountain, into one splendid burst of elegance.

In the latter, however, the character of the woman is considerably smothered. Perhaps it was the case that she had little character, that she was simply a fine lady of fashion; or it may be that that aspect of her was the one which chiefly interested the artist. He seems to have been particularly impressed with her eyes, which indicate at least a trait of character; and in a very subtle way he has made the attitude of the figure and the gesture of the hands and head correspond to it. So in a limited way the picture is representative of a type.

Hals, on the other hand, did not fix upon any particular trait or feature: he broadly surveyed all the externals of his sitter, and represented them as a whole; and with such clear seeing that, although he never penetrates into the mind of his subject — as we shall find Rembrandt did — he does get at the heart of it, and, in his straightforward characterization of what he sees, suggests that character lies beneath it.

In this respect his work is very like the man himself. He must have had fine qualities of mind; else how could he have seen things so simply and completely, and rendered them with such force and expression, inventing for the purpose a method of his own, which, as we have seen, was distinguished by placing his subject in the clear light and by working largely in flat tones? To get at the essential facts of a subject, and to set them down rapidly and precisely, so that all may understand them and be impressed by them, represent great mental power, and place Hals in the front rank of painters. Yet, as a man, he allowed himself to appear to the world an idle fellow, over-given to jollification, and so shiftless that in his old age he was dependent upon the city government for support. That he received it, however, and that his creditors were lenient with him, seem to show that his contemporaries recognized a greatness behind his intemperance and improvidence; and, when in his eighty-second year he died, he was buried beneath the choir of the Church of St. Bavon in Haarlem.

In great contrast to Hals's mode of living was Van Dyck's. He was

early accustomed to Rubens's sumptuous establishment; and, when he visited Italy with letters of introduction from his master, lived in the palaces of his patrons, himself adopting such an elegant ostentation that he was spoken of as "the Cavalier Painter." After his return to Antwerp his patrons belonged to the rich and noble class, and his own style of living was modeled on theirs; so that, when at length in 1632 he received the appointment of court painter to Charles I of England, he maintained an almost princely establishment, and his house at Blackfriars was the resort of fashion. The last two years of his life were spent in traveling on the Continent with his young wife, the daughter of Lord Gowry, Lord Ruthven's son. His health, however, had been broken by excess of work, and he returned to London to die. He was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.

He painted, in his younger days, many altarpieces, "full of a touching religious feeling and enthusiasm"; but his fame rests mainly upon his portraits. In these he invented a style of elegance and refinement which became a model for the artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, corresponding, as it did, to the genteel luxuriousness of the court life of the period.

On the other hand, during the latter century Hals was thought little of, even in Holland, whose artists forsook the traditions of their own school and went astray after other gods — to wit, those of the Italian "grand style." It was not until well on in the nineteenth century that artists, returning to the truth of nature, discovered that Hals had been one of the greatest seers of the truth and one of its most virile interpreters. To-day he is honored for these qualities, and also for the fact that, out of all the Dutch pictures of the seventeenth century now so much admired, his are the most characteristic of the Dutch race and of the art which it produced.

CHAPTER 14

Rembrandt Van Rijn / Bartolome Esteban Murillo

1607(?) – 1669	1618 – 1682
Dutch School	Spanish School of Andalusia

As remarkable as the sudden uprising of a native art in Holland is the fact that it almost immediately reached its maturity, and, in the person of Rembrandt, produced one of the foremost artists of the world. He is one of the few great original men who stand alone. You cannot trace his genius to the influence of his time or to the work of other men who preceded him; nor, although he had followers, could any of them do what he did. He shines out in solitary bigness.

So it is not so much for comparison as for convenience in continuing our method of study, that I couple his name with Murillo's. Yet, having done so, we may find that they have something in common; a common center round which Murillo makes a small circle, Rembrandt an infinitely larger one. Each was a realist as well as an idealist; both painted light, and both translated religious themes into the dialect of the common people.

In his *Children of the Shell,* Murillo chose for subject the infancy of the Christ and St. John; the latter represented with a staff-like cross in token of his future career as preacher and pilgrim, while the application of the legend upon the scroll, "Ecce Agnus Dei," to the little Saviour is further illustrated by the introduction of a lamb. These symbols were prescribed by the church's tradition; Murillo put them in partly because his patrons demanded them, and partly because he himself was a devout Christian; but in other respects he is influenced by a man's love of little children and an artist's desire to create a beautiful picture. He takes for his type the warm-skinned, supple, brown-eyed children that played half-naked in the bright sunshine of Seville; their beauty of limb and grace of movement being characteristic of their free, open-air life. This part of the picture is real enough; a bit of nature translated into paint. But the act in which

they are engaged, and the way in which it is represented, suggest an idealization of the facts; and this ideal feeling is increased by the soft vaporous light in which the little bodies are bathed; a kind of light "that never was on sea or land," a product of the artist's imagination.

The people of Murillo's own day loved his work because they could enter into it and understand it, for it portrayed in its virgins, children, and saints the type of figures with which they were familiar, with the sweet gentleness of sentiment that reflected the dispositions of this Southern race. For by that time the darkness of the Inquisition had cleared away; the Jesuits were winning the devotion of the people by beautifying the churches; monks and nuns had abandoned the rigor of self-inflicted torture, and were seeking by lives of kindliness and by holy contemplation to have visions of the divine love. Pictures were demanded that should represent this happier change. Elizabeth, the saintly Queen of Hungary, engaged in doing acts of mercy to the sick and poor; St. Anthony of Padua, the holy Franciscan monk, blessed with an ecstatic vision of the Child-Christ in the midst of a choir of infant angels; the Holy Family, poor peasant folk, but radiant with heavenly light and love — these, and the like, Murillo painted, and in such a way that the people of his day could recognize the counterparts of themselves, men and women and children, familiar to their daily experience, and yet lifted up above them in a light far lovelier than that of their own beautiful sunshine — a spiritual light. So they loved his work; and for the same reason — that it is of earth and yet above it, humanly natural and yet spiritually ideal — it has continued to be loved.

Rembrandt's picture, on the other hand, *The Sortie of the Banning Cock Company,* did not satisfy the men for whom it was painted. It is one of the kind known as a "corporation picture": an aggregation of portraits. Sometimes it was the council of one of the trade guilds; sometimes the governing body or the surgical force of a hospital; very often one of the numerous militia companies, that wished to be commemorated. Franz Hals painted many of these pictures; so also did another popular Dutch painter, Bartholomeus van der Heist. Both these artists gave great satisfaction to their patrons; for they took care that each member, who had paid his quota toward the expense of the picture, should have his portrait clearly delineated. It was, after all, a

correct concession to a quite reasonable vanity. Besides, the whole tendency of Dutch art, as we have seen, was toward direct and intimate portraiture, and the racial tendency of the Dutch mind toward straightforwardness and clarity and precision in all things. The people, on the one hand fighting against the encroachments of the ocean and the invasion of the Spaniard, and on the other extending their trade over the world, were living very real lives, and their artists as a body were realists.

Rembrandt had proved himself a realist when he painted, in his twenty-sixth year. *The Anatomy Lesson*, in which the famous Dr. Tulp is represented conducting a lecture in dissection before a class of surgeons. It was a work of marvelous realism, and immediately secured for the young painter a number of commissions from those who wished to have their portraits painted, and caused his studio to be sought by students eager to learn from him. It made him famous.

Ten years later he was asked to paint this picture of Captain Banning Cock's company of musketeers. With the assurance of genius, he dared to depart from the usual way of representing such a subject. Instead of grouping the company in their guild-house, he represents them issuing from it, as if the occasion were a shooting-match. The captain, dressed in black with a red scarf, is giving directions to his lieutenant, whose costume is yellow with a white scarf around his waist; the drummer is sounding the call, which arouses the barking of a dog; the ensign shakes loose the big flag; a sergeant stretches out his arm as he gives an order; picket-men are hurrying out, a musketeer is loading his gun, a boy running beside him with the powder-horn; and in the midst of the group, "as if," says Mr. John La Farge, "to give a look of chance and suddenness to the scene, is the figure of a little girl, strangely enough with a dead fowl strung from her waist." She appears to be engaged in some form of play with a boy, who has a leaf-crowned helmet on his head and is turning his back so that it is his leg which is chiefly visible.

Rembrandt, in fact, chose an instant of sudden and general animation, and by his genius made it thrill with the appearance of actual life. The picture, as originally painted, was larger than at present; but when it was removed to the Amsterdam town hall it did not fit the space on the wall and was cut down in size, a slice being

taken off the right side and the bottom. This barbarous treatment has particularly interfered with the relation of the two front figures to the rest of the group, giving them too much an appearance of stepping out of the picture, whereas in its original size we may be sure the balance of the composition was complete.

To draw its various parts into one supreme impression Rembrandt abandoned the custom of setting all the figures in a clear, even light, and welded the whole together in an elaborate pattern of light and shade. This had become darkened by dirt and smoke, so that the picture was taken by French writers of the eighteenth century for a night scene, and styled *Patrouille de Nuit,* and Sir Joshua Reynolds followed their error by calling it *The Night Watch.* Subsequent cleaning, however, has proved that, notwithstanding some darkening of the color as the result of time, the picture represents a daylight scene. The company streams out of the dark doorway into bright sunlight, which plays upon it with innumerable accidental effects.

In such action of light, with its glints of surprise and manifold variations, there is joy to the artist, especially to one whose mind was so alive to what is momentary and unusual as Rembrandt's; a mystery, also, and abundance of mental and artistic suggestion, in the varying depths of shadow. Moreover, it may have seemed to him the most effectual way of securing the unity and momentariness of the impression. If every part had been shown with equal distinctness, it would have been impossible for the spectator to receive from it the instantaneous shock of wonder and surprise that he now experiences. His attention, instead of being immediately focused, would have been scattered over a hundred details. As it is, he sees the picture as a whole, and, before he begins to consider the parts, receives a single, profound impression.

This original treatment, so entirely at variance with traditions of corporation pictures, cost Rembrandt the patronage of the civic guards, and his commissions fell off from that time forward.

That Rembrandt was wrong to paint this particular picture in this way is also the opinion of the great French critic and artist, Eugene Fromentin, because the occasion was not a suitable one for putting into practice this peculiar method of lighting. Fromentin's argument, briefly summarized, is as follows;

Rembrandt was compact of two natures: one, the realist; the other, the idealist. At times he was impressed with the facts of things — the main, essential facts of a landscape or of a human personality; and, whether he is painting with the brush or drawing on copper with the etching-needle, the result is a wonderful synthesis or summary of the truth of actual appearance. At other times it is the truth beneath the surface, the invisible truth, that fascinates him; and in his attempts to express this he discovered for himself a new treatment of light. It was something different from the chiaroscuro, or arrangement of light and shade, which other artists used for the threefold purpose of giving substance to form, of producing an effect of aerial perspective, and of making the picture brilliant and impressive in pattern. He, too, used this method of chiaroscuro, but he carried it much farther than any other artist before or since, so that it is called, after his name, the Rembrandt-esque treatment. He immersed everything in a bath of shadow, plunging into it even the light itself; he surrounded centers of light with waves of darkness. The darkness itself in his pictures is transparent; you can peer into it and discover half-concealed forms; everything provokes curiosity; there is mystery; and it acts upon the mind, so that the real and the imaginary become mingled. It is at once reality and a dream.

Rembrandt discovered for himself this power of making chiaroscuro a source of emotional feeling; but he went even farther. Light exists independent of the objects it shines upon, and he tried to paint only with the help of light, to draw only with light, to make the light itself express ideas and emotions. To succeed it was necessary to make great sacrifices; to relinquish much that was dear to his other self, the realist: the strong drawing and firm modeling, the magnificent certainty of effect. These are qualities that might be looked for in a picture of citizen-soldiers, such as *The Sortie of the Banning Cock Company,* but are absent from it. It was required of him by the circumstances that he should paint a reality; what he produced was a vision of light glimmering like phosphorescence on darkness.

This picture was Rembrandt's first big effort to embody his new conception of the possibilities of painting, and his whole after life was a struggle to reconcile the two sides of his nature, culminating in 1661, eight years before his death, in that triumph of mingled realism

and idealism, *The Syndics of the Cloth-workers' Guild.* And in many single portraits are revealed the wonderful resources of this treatment of light and shade for the purpose of expression. The heads are enveloped in darkness, out of which emerge the features, the eyes especially arresting the attention. Through the depth and poignancy of their gaze one seems to look into the very soul of the subject. This faculty of profound suggestion, the power of a man who sees into the heart of things and makes others partake of his imagination, appears also in his etchings.

Rembrandt is recognized as the Prince of Etchers, by reason both of the range and quality of his prints, which include landscapes, portraits, Biblical subjects, and studies of beggars and of other picturesque specimens of poverty. Sometimes they are executed with extraordinary economy of means, a few lines in opposition to the spaces of paper giving the impression of a far-reaching landscape flooded with sunshine; sometimes they are worked up into richness of texture, or again are elaborate creations of light and shade.

Etching being an art which demands certainty of brain and hand and yet admits of so much illusion, we may understand why throughout his life Rembrandt, realist and idealist, was so fond of it. The method is briefly this. A polished copper plate is covered with a film of melted wax, which is then blackened with smoke by holding it over a lamp or candle. The artist with a needle, or any correspondingly sharp-pointed instrument, draws his design in the wax; thus baring the copper where the lines appear. He then plunges his plate into a bath of nitric acid, which bites into the parts exposed, the surfaces still covered with the wax resisting the eating in of the acid. When the plate has been bitten and the wax removed, a roller, covered with printing-ink, is passed over it, that the ink may settle into the channels. The surface is then cleaned, and dampened paper is laid over it and pressed down in a printing press, so that the paper sucks up the ink from the hollows of the lines. This actual process of printing is the same as is used in the case of steel-engravings; but in the latter the lines have been dug out by a sharp instrument in the hard metal; whereas in the case of etching the hand moves freely and easily through the soft wax; and, further, instead of the groove in the metal being sharp and hard from the tool, it is soft and furred by the



Top: Children of the Shell, Murillo
Bottom: Sortie of the Banning Cock Company,

insinuating tooth of the acid. An etching, therefore, is richer in its blacks, with a more generous contrast of light and shade, and at the same time, if the artist chooses to make it so, more delicate. It is, of all the methods of art, the one which responds most immediately to the volition of the artist; it is preeminently the artist's art. That Rembrandt should have practised it throughout his life, and have attained in it a proficiency which no other artist has surpassed, is of itself sufficient to place him in the foremost rank of art. The artist who has most nearly approached him in scope and excellence as an etcher is Whistler.

We started with a comparison of Murillo and Rembrandt, and have discovered, if I have told the story right, that the smaller thing, which Murillo attempted, he did to the satisfaction of his contemporaries and of posterity; whereas Rembrandt, striving for something infinitely greater, had his successes and his failures, was misunderstood by the people of his day, and during the century which followed, when the influence of Italian painting, spreading over Europe, had penetrated even into Holland, was neglected. The story of their work corresponds with the story of their lives.

Murillo's proceeded smoothly and pleasantly. He was born in Seville, the birthplace also of Velasquez. At the age of eleven he was apprenticed to an uncle who was a painter, and his gentle nature and diligence soon made him a favorite with his master and his fellow students. He managed to live by painting little pictures of sacred subjects on linen; offering them for sale at the *feria*, or weekly market. It was the custom to bring paints and brushes to the fair, so that patrons could have the pictures altered to suit their taste; and, as he sat among the stalls, he had plenty of opportunity of studying and sketching the city urchins and beggar boys that lay or frolicked in the sunshine. He afterward painted many of these, and they are among his best work, so true to life and vigorously executed. In this way two years passed.

Then there returned to Seville a fellow-student of Murillo's, who had exchanged painting for soldiering and been with the army in Flanders. But the sight of the works of Rubens and Van Dyck had revived his love of painting, and he had visited London to study under the latter artist. He was now back in Seville with some copies

of Van Dyck's work, and with so many stories of what he had seen, that Murillo was stirred with the ambition to go to Rome. He trudged on foot to Madrid, and called on his fellow-townsman, Velasquez, to secure letters of introduction. The great artist received him kindly, and, being struck with his earnestness, invited him to stay in his own house. Velasquez was called away in attendance on the king, and during his absence Murillo made copies of paintings in the royal galleries by Ribera, Van Dyck, and Velasquez himself. The latter, on his return, was so pleased with the progress the young man had made, that he advised him to go to Rome; but by this time Murillo had no desire to leave his country. He stayed in Madrid for further study, and then returned to Seville after three years' absence.

One of the mendicant brothers of the little Franciscan monastery had collected a sum of money, which the friars determined to expend upon some paintings for their cloister. The amount was too small to attract the well-known artists of the city, so with much compunction they gave the commission to the young, untried Murillo. It was the opportunity he wanted; and he made such good use of it that his reputation was at once established. Henceforth his time was fully occupied in decorating churches and in painting for private individuals; he was admitted into the best society, made a rich marriage, became the head of the School of Seville, and all the time was beloved of the people.

A fall from a painter's scaffold cut short his activity. Incapacitated from work, he lingered for two years, spending much of his time in prayer in the church of Santa Cruz, beneath Campana's painting of *The Descent from the Cross;* and beneath this, by his request, he was buried.

The date of Rembrandt's birth is doubtful, being variously assigned to 1606, 1607, and 1608. His father, Harmen van Rijn (Harmen of the Rhine), owned a mill on the banks of the Rhine at Leyden. When quite young the boy was sent to the Latin school in order that, as Orless, the best authority upon his early life, puts it, "he might in the fullness of time be able to serve his native city and the Republic with his knowledge." However, his inclination toward drawing was so marked that his father placed him with Jacob van Swanenburch. Three years later he went to Amsterdam to study

under Lastman, who had spent many years in Rome. But with him Rembrandt stayed only six months, and then returned to Leyden, "resolved," as Orless says, "to study and practise painting alone in his own fashion." He stayed at home six years, working much from the members of his family, and frequently etching his own head, with various kinds of facial expression.

In 1630 he moved to Amsterdam, which henceforth was to be the scene of his life. The city at that time had recovered from the shock of war and was rapidly growing in commercial prosperity and liberally encouraging the fine arts. For a time all went well with Rembrandt. *The Anatomy Lesson,* painted in 1632, had made him famous; commissions poured in and students flocked to his studio. Two years later he married a young lady of property, Saskia van Uylenborch, to whom he was deeply attached, and whose portrait he painted or etched eighteen times, besides using her as a model in various pictures. He was able now to indulge his taste for beautiful things; was a generous buyer of other artists' work, and filled his handsome house in the Breedstraat with treasures. Ten years of domestic happiness and magnificent production followed his marriage, and then, in 1642, the clouds gathered.

In that year he was involved in disputes, as we have seen, over *The Sortie of the Banning Cock Company;* but, worse than that, his beloved Saskia died, leaving an infant son, Titus. In the emptiness of his home and heart, the great artist buried himself with ever deeper purpose and grander energy in his work. It is characteristic of this sad time that his portraits of himself cease for six years. Then appears an etching, in which he no longer represents himself in splendid clothes, with fierce mustache and flowing hair; but as a simple citizen. His hair and mustache are trimmed; a large hat covers his head, his tunic is unadorned; he is seated at a window, drawing, but lifts his head and gazes full at the spectator with his piercing eyes. During this time he owed much to the sympathy of the burgomaster Jan Six, a scholar and connoisseur; and now the burgomaster's mansion, the celebrated Six Gallery at Amsterdam, owes much of its fame to the examples which it contains by Rembrandt.

In 1656 he was overtaken by financial troubles, due to legal disputes with the trustees of his wife's will, to his liberality toward his

family in Leyden, and to his own love of buying works of art and his lack of business ability. He was declared a bankrupt, his house was sold, and his treasures were dispersed at auction; and, by the time that his creditors were satisfied, there was nothing left for him. But his devotion to his art was unabated; the years which followed were distinguished by a series of noble paintings and etchings, among them *The Syndics*. It is good to know that he had friends, and that his last years, though contracted in means, were comfortable. In the last portrait of himself, painted a year before his death, he has depicted his face wrinkled by time and care, but laughing heartily. It sums up the triumph of the man and the artist over evil fortune.

After his death he was soon forgotten. Through the eighteenth century Dutch painters, like those of other countries, turned to Italy for inspiration; Rembrandt's homely naturalism, representing, for example, the Bible scenes, peopled with rude peasants instead of fine men and graceful women in classic robes, was scorned as vulgar; his marvels of light, condemned for the "slovenly conduct of his pencil"; his portraits, that search into the souls of his subjects, despised for their "laborious, ignorant diligence." He was neglected, while Murillo continued to be abundantly admired.

Now, however, when painting has shaken itself free from conventional traditions and once more turned to nature, Murillo is esteemed less highly, and Rembrandt has been restored to his place among the giants.

CHAPTER 15
Jacob Van Ruisdael / Nicolas Poussin

1625(?) – 1682	1593 – 1665
Dutch School	Classical School of France

At this point of our survey of the field of painting France swings into the line of vision. There had been other French painters before Poussin, but the latter was the greatest up to his time, and has had so important an influence upon subsequent French art, that in our selection of prominent names he comes first.

When we compare his *Et Ego in Arcadia* with Ruisdael's *Waterfall* we are conscious at once of a vast difference of feeling, both in the attitude of each painter's mind toward nature and in the impression produced upon our own. We experience before Ruisdael's a sense of strenuousness and sadness, very different to the serenity and idyllic sweetness of Poussin's. We are face to face, in the one case with the realities of life, in the other with the pleasant dream of a world that only exists in the imagination. Yet Poussin composed the surroundings of his figures from real landscape — that of Italy; probably, however, not from one scene, but with a selection from many; while Ruisdael's landscape, which has such an air of stern reality, was actually borrowed — in its general character, at any rate — from the work of another painter, Allart van Everdingen.

It will occur to you, perhaps, as strange that a Dutch painter of the seventeenth century should have borrowed from any one instead of studying straight from nature; just as it may have struck you that the scenery of the *Waterfall* is not suggestive of Holland.

The fact is that Ruisdael, during his first and, as many consider, his best period, painted pictures thoroughly Dutch in character, studies of the landscape round his native city of Haarlem, showing a marked fondness for massed clouds and warm sunshine. But they met with little encouragement from his own countrymen, and he moved to Amsterdam. In the latter city was established Allart van

Everdingen, who had begun as a painter of the sea, taking trips on the Baltic for the better study of his subject. But on one occasion the vessel had been driven by storm on to the coast of Norway; and, while he waited for a chance of getting home, he made a number of sketches of the country, with its rocky shore and pines and waterfalls. Returned to Holland, he used this material for pictures, which, partly because of their unusualness, were very popular. Ruisdael, then, finding his own work neglected, determined to give the public what they seemed to want, and out of his own head invented landscapes similar in character to Everdingen's. Their very wildness and sternness may have attracted him, fitting in with the sadness and gloom that were gathering over his own spirit; for this picture and all the productions of his later life are imprinted with melancholy. And well they might be; for he was evidently of so little account in his own day, that the date of his birth is doubtful, and scarcely more is recorded of his life than that, after working unsuccessfully in Haarlem, he moved to Amsterdam, and thence returned to his native city in poverty, to die in an almshouse.

In respect of sadness he is akin to Rembrandt, who also lived in the company of sorrow; and these two artists strike the only note of intense feeling in the Dutch art of the seventeenth century, which, as a whole, is distinguished by its equable and contented attitude toward life. Yet in the intensity of Rembrandt there is no bitterness; and even in this landscape oft Ruisdael's we may discover a strain of tenderness. For, contrasted with the inhospitable wildness of the coast and the restless tumult of water are the quiet composure of the little spire nestling amid the trees, and the gentle evidences of quiet life in the string of cattle passing down to drink. But the noblest feature of the scene is the fine sky with its masses of cloud. The mountainous land and waterfall may have been invented or borrowed; but this at least has been studied by Ruisdael from the nature of his own land. And the skies of Holland are proverbially grand, partly because the prevailing course of clouds is from the west, so that huge volumes of vapor come continually rolling in from the North Sea, and partly because the land, being uniformly level, affords least obstruction to the vast appearance of the sky and to the gathering and passage of the clouds. None of the Dutchmen of the seventeenth century had

been so impressed with the vastness and buoyant force and freedom of the sky as Ruisdael; in which respect he anticipated the achievements of modern Dutch artists, who have found in the skies of Holland an inexhaustible theme.

I think it is capable of demonstration that every landscape-painter of powerful imagination and serious poetic feeling has reveled in the representation of the sky. It is as if his spirit leaps from the definiteness and circumscribed limits of the earth into the limitless, unexplorable vastness of the air. The ground is local, tethering him by the foot to what man can examine and know; the sky, however, at some point ceases to be merely an envelope to the earth and mingles with that ether in which the whole universe swims. May we not believe that Ruisdael, compelled to fashion an unreal, or, at least, an alien land, to tempt his customers, satisfied both his love of country and the sincerity of his study of nature by the ardor with which he threw himself into the representations of the skies? Nor is there anything unduly sentimental in such a belief, for the artist is also human, and has his pride in himself and his preferences, and does best what best he loves.

And now let us turn again to the picture by Poussin. "I too have been in Arcadia"; in that sweet spot, undisturbed by nature's violence or the tumult and clang of human life. It exists nowhere, and yet everywhere is to be found. It was Poussin's fortune to discover it.

He was born of a noble but poor family in Normandy, that hardy country from which William went forth to conquer England, and, some eight hundred years later, Millet, to conquer, after a long-drawn-out conflict, the appreciation of his own countrymen. Poussin learned painting in the local town of Les Andelys, and then proceeded to Paris, where he spent much of his time in drawing from casts and in copying prints after Raphael and the latter's pupil, Givilio Romano. By the time that he was able to visit Rome, he was in his thirtieth year, a man of matured mind, nourished upon the antique and upon the suave, balanced style of Raphael; with a standard, therefore, fixed, and a mind capable of doing its own thinking.

It was well for him that it was so, since the Italy of his time was in its decadence. The last of the great masters had died with Tintoretto. They had been succeeded by many clever painters, but by none of

commanding genius. On the one hand were Guido Reni and Carlo Dolci, saturated with sentimentality; on the other, Salvator Rosa, following Caravaggio in depicting what was impetuously powerful, and yet again Tiepolo, a brilliant and vivacious decorator. Poussin, amid this uncertain flux of energy, attached himself to Domenichino, a painter of much strength but poor as a colorist. Meanwhile he pursued his study of sculptured low-reliefs, practising modeling as well as drawing.

The effect of this is apparent in the grouping and drawing of the figures in this picture, for they are arranged as in a low-relief: the woman slightly in advance of the two stooping figures, while the fourth figure is only slightly behind these. The three planes in which the figures stand are flattened as far as possible into one; and the figures are relieved by the contrasts of light and shade, instead of being detached in their separate envelopes of atmosphere. The method, in fact, is a sculptor's rather than a painter's.

This is the first point to notice; and the second is the influence of Raphael. The latter can be traced in the serene composure of the whole composition, obtained by the perfect balance of the full and empty spaces, and by the harmonious grace of the lines that oppose and repeat one another with studied calculation, as well as by the grace of gesture and suave refinement of expression that characterize the figures. Both these influences combined to make the rendering of the subject an ideal one; and, except in the superior tact of taste displayed by Poussin, do not distinguish his pictures radically from those of the many other followers of Raphael and the antique. But here steps in a third influence, that of the Italian landscape; and, by combining the latter with the other two, Poussin originated something new, and became a model for other painters, establishing a principle of perfection that has served as a standard for French painting down to the present day.

Before his time the landscape was subordinated to the figures; even Titian, whose landscapes are so beautiful, felt them primarily as backgrounds. But in this picture of Poussin's it would be hard to decide whether the landscape accompanies the figures or the figures the landscape. In fact, both ingredients are of equal importance.

The love of landscape is particularly characteristic of northern





Top: Waterfall, Jacob Von Ruisdael
Bottom: Shepherds in Arcady, Nicolas Poussin

nations, and it would seem that Poussin had it, but not in the way in which the Dutchmen felt it. They loved the landscape for its own sake; Poussin, for the way it could be made to contribute to the feeling of his figures. The latter were mostly classical in feeling; and thus he became the father of the so-called "classical" or "heroic" landscape. We can understand how it happened.

The visitor to Italy is apt to find that the Italian landscape makes a unique appeal. In every direction it seems to suggest pictures, presenting itself to the eye in ready-made compositions; moreover, it is continually a pictorial setting to the towns and villas, and, in the neighborhood of Rome especially, to the antique ruins. Many of us must have felt this; and, also, that there is a curious relation between the pictures in the Italian galleries and the landscape outside; that the latter, in fact, with its inexhaustible suggestion of stately compositions, must have had a great influence upon the imagination of Italian artists in the direction of helping to suggest the "grand style" of Italian painting.

To this Italy, then, of pictorial landscape came Poussin, already full of the spirit of Raphael and of classic sculpture, and with a fresh eye that recognized a kinship of feeling between the landscape and the style of figure-work which he had learned to admire. He had discovered a country in which the classical figures and those of Raphael could move and have their being. If we turn to the picture we shall feel, I think, how completely the persons belong to the scene in which we find them: they are naturally at home in it; they are part of it; it is Arcady, and they are Arcadians.

Strolling along in the pleasant sunshine, the woman and the three shepherds have chanced upon a tomb. There are traces of an inscription on it; and the father, stooping to rub away the lichen and moss, reveals the words, "Et Ego in Arcadia." I too, a nameless one, crumbling forgotten within these stones, I too have lived and loved in this region of innocent delight, where man is in perfect accord with his surroundings; rising and lying down with the sun, and nourished upon the bosom of mother earth; mind and body healthy, since conduct and desire are in conformity with nature. It is the country of youth, eternally young in an old world, wherein the children sport and happy lovers stray, and even the aged may linger if they have

kept some freshness in their souls. Correggio and Raphael had lived there; and it is the latter, maybe, who calls from the tomb to welcome Poussin to the charmed spot.

We have thus examined the character and feeling of Poussin's work, and found that it was not originally inspired by nature, but founded on a direct study of the antique and upon Raphael's interpretation of the same; and that, when it did receive an inspiration direct from nature, the latter was not used naturally, but to harmonize with the ideal conception of the figures. Let us now inquire how it was that his work became the source of what is called the "classic" and "academic" in French art.

We must remember that the French race has a strong infusion of Latin blood, and that it had been brought under the influence of the legal and social system of the Romans. At the break-up of the empire Italy was overrun with foreigners, and the character of its people became changed, the continuity of its institutions and traditions broken. These, however, survived in France; and the French, much more even than the Italians, are the inheritors of those qualities and ideals which made up the greatness of the Roman people.

Briefly, they comprised a fondness for system and a capacity for organization; a tendency to skilful adaptation rather than to originality; less regard for ideas than for fundamental principles, and especially for those of construction, for what is technically called the "architectonics." The Romans were great builders, and reduced the art of construction to a system, so that the major part of it could be carried out by unskilled labor. With this intention, they laid special stress upon form, logical relationship between the parts and the whole, and the dignity of the mass.

Let us see how the inheritance of these qualities by the French affected the history of their painting. In Poussin's time the throne of France was occupied by Louis XIV, whom the court painter Lebrun was flatteringly depicting in his paintings and tapestries as a Roman conqueror. Full of the Roman spirit, he played the role of an organizer. To perpetuate the purity of the French language, he established the Institute of France, composed of forty members. To this day the selection of these "Immortals" is determined less by their contribution to thought than by the perfection of their style — by their

mastery, in fact, of the architectonics of their craft.. With the same zeal for system and organization, Louis founded an academy of painting and sculpture and an academy in Rome for the instruction of French artists. These, being official institutions, needed a system of principles. This was discovered in the art of Poussin.

In it was exemplified a diligent regard for the architectonics; a careful building up of parts so as to produce a balanced and harmonious whole; a preference for ideal or abstract perfection of line and form and spacing over the representation of character or sentiment; an avoidance of what is original in favor of a tactful reproduction of ancient models; and, in general, the preeminence of style over subject-matter. Poussin's color was a weak point; but that mattered little, for color — both the skill in it and the appreciation of it — is an affair of individual temperament, whereas line and form and composition are fundamental. It was on the side where painting touches sculpture and architecture, not in its special province of color, light, and atmosphere, that a standard of excellence could be established.

Granted the usefulness of establishing a standard, no better one could have been devised. For, although, as we shall discover, the existence of a fixed official standard will tend toward dry formalism, and almost every painter that achieves greatness will do so by breaking away from the rigidity of the academic style, yet the advantage of the system will continue. Its maintenance will be justified by the very high general average of skill that it insures.

It is Poussin's title to a place in history that he was the father of this classic or academic system, which has made the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris the greatest training-school of art in the modern world.

CHAPTER 16
Meindert Hobbema / Claude Gellée

1638(?) – 1709 (called Lorrain)
Dutch School 1600 – 1682
Classical School of France

The village of Middelharnis is one of the places that lay claim to be the birthplace of Hobbema, the town of Koeverden and the cities of Haarlem and Amsterdam being the others. This picture, *The Avenue*, gives us a clear idea of the approach to it, as it appeared in 1689, when Hobbema is supposed to have painted it. It is a bit of portraiture of nature, whereas Claude's picture — you might guess it from the title, *Landing of Cleopatra at Tarsus* — illustrates the use of nature to build up a classic composition; the borrowing from many sources, and the arrangement of the details to produce a scene which the artist's imagination has conceived to be ideally beautiful.

We ought to be able to enjoy the one and the other, but we do not feel toward both in the same way. It is very probable that we shall begin by preferring the Claude. If so, it is largely because the lines and masses of its composition are more seductive. The hulls, masts, and spars of the shipping on one side balance the lines of the architecture on the other, and between them is a gently dipping curve of faint forms, which separate the luminous quiet of the open sky from the glittering movement of the water and the busy animation of the figures. Besides the actual beauty of balance between the full and empty spaces of the composition, we get the added enjoyment of contrast between a sense of activity and a still deeper one of permanence and repose. Everything has been nicely calculated to stir our imagination pleasurably. We find ourselves thinking that if there is no spot on earth like this, it is a pity; that there ought to be one, and that the artist has made it possible. In fact, he has created it; and thereby we are the happier.

We are little concerned with Cleopatra, and scarcely care to distinguish which of the figures is Mark Antony's. The feeling is that a

shore which was once a ragged ending of the land, where the sea began, has been made a stately approach of terraces, leading up to noble buildings; that in these, as in the shipping, man's creative power is apparent; that the scene is an improvement upon nature.

Now we turn to the Hobbema. It is a composition of vertical lines contrasted with horizontal; a much harsher arrangement of spaces — of nature unadorned, we might almost say; or, at any rate, taken as the artist found it. We are disposed to feel, perhaps, that he was lacking in imagination, and that his work, as compared with the ideal beauty of Claude's, is homely and uninteresting; that, to use an expression of the eighteenth century, when writers and artists prided themselves on having a "pretty fancy," it is "pedestrian"; that it doesn't soar, but walks afoot like the common people.

Certainly Hobbema was not inventive, like Claude; he did not devise or try to construct an ideal Holland out of his imagination. But imagination may display itself also by its sympathy with, and insight into, things as they are; and it was this kind of imagination that Hobbema possessed. He loved the country-side, studied it as a lover, and has depicted it with such intimacy of truth, that the road to Middelharnis seems as real to us to-day as it did over two hundred years ago to the artist. We see the poplars, with their lopped stems, lifting their bushy tops against that wide, high sky which floats over a flat country; full of billowy clouds, as the sky near the North Sea is apt to be. Deep ditches skirt the road, which drain and collect the water for purposes of irrigation, and later on will join some deeper, wider canal, for purposes of navigation. We get a glimpse on the right of patient perfection of gardening, where a man is pruning his grafted fruit-trees; farther on, a group of substantial farm-buildings. On the opposite side of the road stretches a long, flat meadow, or "polder," up to the little village which nestles so snugly around its tall church tower; the latter fulfilling also the purpose of a beacon, lit by night, to guide the wayfarer on sea and land: a scene of tireless industry, comfortable prosperity, and smiling peace, snatched alike from the encroachments of the ocean and from the devastation of a foreign foe, by a people as rugged and aspiring as those poplars, as buoyant in their self-reliance as the clouds. Pride and love of country breathe through the whole scene; and we may be dead to some very



Top: The Avenue, Middelharnis, Holland, Meindert Hobbema
Bottom: The Landing of Cleopatra at Tarsus, Claude Lorrain

wholesome instincts if we ourselves do not feel drawn, on the one hand, toward its sweet and intimate simplicity, and, on the other, toward the fearless matter-of-factness of its composition.

Indeed, if we have entered into the spirit of it, we may find that this picture, as well as Claude's, has its ideal beauty: if by this term we understand that kind of beauty which is distinguished by the idea revealed in it. In other words, it is not only imaginary subjects which may be ideal: there may also be an idealization of facts. Their outward appearance may be so rendered as to make us feel also their underlying significance, the soul, as it were, within them. In this way a portrait may be idealized. I am not thinking for the moment of the kind of idealization indulged in by Van Dyck, who gave to all his sitters, men and women, an elegant refinement corresponding to the idea of elegance and refinement in himself. That is more like the kind of idealization in Claude's picture. But let us take the case of a portrait of your own mother. One painter may paint it so that anybody, comparing it with the original, will say it is a good likeness; whereas another may have the imagination to penetrate beneath the exterior of the woman and reproduce something of what you know of her as a mother. He gets at the soul of the face.

Similarly the portrait of a landscape may reproduce the sentiment which attracts one to the country-side; the love of the painter for it, the attachment of those who live in it, what it is to them as part of their lives. Such a landscape is in a measure ideal. The modern French have coined a phrase for it – *paysage intime*; for which I can find no better translation than "the well-known, well-loved country-side." They coined it to describe the kind of landscape that was painted by Rousseau, Dupre, Corot and some other French artists who made then-headquarters at the little village of Barbizon on the borders of the forest of Fontainebleau; and these men, as we shall see, were followers of Hobbema and the other Dutch artists who had lived two hundred years before. Very little is known of Hobbema's life. He appears to have been born at Amsterdam in 1638, but, as we have seen, other towns claim to be his birthplace'. It is probable that he was the pupil of his uncle, Jacob van Ruisdael, and certain that he lived in Amsterdam. He died poor; his last lodging being in the Roosegraft, the street in which Rembrandt, also poor, had died forty

years before. His works were little appreciated in Holland until nearly a hundred years after his death, and most of them found their way to England.

Claude, on the contrary, enjoyed in his lifetime a European reputation. Yet his early life was modest enough. He was born of poor parents in the little village of Chamagne, near the right bank of the Moselle, in what is now the department of Vosges, but in 1600 was the duchy of Lorraine. His real name was Claude Gelée, but from his native country he received the name of Claude le Lorrain, or, more shortly, Claude Lorrain. It IS supposed that as a child he was apprenticed to a pastry-cook, and, when the years of his apprenticeship were completed, set off with a party of pastry-cooks to Rome. The Lorrainers were famous in this capacity, and the young Claude had no difficulty in finding employment. He was engaged by a landscape-painter, Agostino Tassi, as cook and general housekeeper, with the privilege of cleaning his master's brushes. He gained from him, however, instruction in painting, and seems to have become his assistant. When he was twenty-five years old he revisited France and stayed two years, returning then to Italy, where the rest of his life was spent. On the journey back he fell in with Charles Errard, who was one of the original twelve members of the French Academy and was later employed in establishing the famous French school at Rome, and in 1666 was appointed its first director.

For many years Claude worked on diligently in a modest way, until, about his fortieth year, he attracted the attention of Cardinal Bentivoglio, who not only gave him commissions, but introduced him to the Pope, Urban VIII. The latter, intent on maintaining the temporal power of the church, was continually erecting fortifications, in which he did not spare the most precious monuments of antiquity. Hence arose a joke which played upon his name — he was a member of the famous Florentine family of the Barberini "Quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini." But he was an excellent scholar and fond of pictures, and became very much attached to Claude. The rest of the artist's life is one of fame. The three popes who succeeded Urban were his patrons, as were the noblest families of Italy, while commissions came to him from his native land, from the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, and even far-off England.

Besides his paintings he left forty-four etchings. He also executed two hundred sketches in pen or pencil, washed in with brown or India ink, the high lights being brought out with touches of white. On the backs of them the artist noted the date on which the sketch was developed into a picture, and for whom the latter was intended. The story is that his popularity produced many imitators, and that he adopted this means to establish his proprietorship of the subject in each case. But the more probable theory regards these sketches as a record which the artist made in a general way of his work. He collected them into a volume, which, known as the *Liber Veritatis*, has been for more than a hundred years in the possession of the Dukes of Westminster. It was in rivalry of this book that the English painter, Turner, as we shall find, produced his book of drawings, which he called *Liber Studiorum*.

Claude, like that other French artist, Nicolas Poussin, who was seven years his senior, belonged to Italy rather than to France. Both introduced something new into the field of subject. Like Poussin, also, Claude conceived the idea of giving ideal or heroic beauty to the landscape, that it might correspond to the heroic incidents in which his figures were engaged. But he went a step further in the direction of pure landscape; making his figures of comparatively little importance, and concentrating his effort upon the ideal or heroic character of the landscape, into which also he incorporated the beauty of architecture. He was a close student of nature, sketched and painted in the open air, and, like his Dutch contemporary Cuyp, filled his skies with the appearance of real sunshine. But the use that he made of nature was unnatural.

Instead of being satisfied to paint it as it is, for its own sake, as Hobbema was, he felt, like Poussin, that the province of art was to improve upon it. So Poussin, more particularly through his figures, and Claude, through landscape, were the founders in French art of what is called the classic or academic motive, which would reject everything that is "common" or "vulgar," and paint only types as near as possible to perfection. In order to secure this in the case of a figure subject, it will be necessary to paint the head from one model, the body from another, the hands from another, and so on; or, at any rate, to copy any single model only in the parts which seem beautiful,

while the others must be brought to perfection by the painter's skill. So, in the case of a landscape, the painter selects a morsel from this place, and others elsewhere, and puts together out of his head a composition that shall present an ideally beautiful arrangement of lines and masses. This exactly suited the taste of the times, in which Racine was writing classical tragedies and Le Notre was laying out the gardens of Versailles with combinations of grottoes, fountains, architecture, and landscape. The result was that Claude's pictures had an extraordinary popularity, which extended on into the eighteenth century and far into the following one. He was regarded as the greatest of landscape-painters.

When, however, Frenchmen, following the example of Constable in England, began to turn to nature directly, they, as he, discovered what Hobbema had done, and made his work the foundation of their own efforts; carrying, however, the truth to nature for its own sake even farther than he did. For, although Hobbema depicted the natural forms of trees and the appearances of the sky and of light, he did not reproduce the varied coloring of nature, confining his palette mostly to grays and browns and a certain sharp green. Nor had he the skill to paint real atmosphere or to make the trees move in it. Even in his pictures, close to nature as they are, there is visible a conventional method of representation; that is to say, a habit of painting according to a plan which he had discovered for himself rather than with a continually fresh eye for the various manifestations of nature. It was reserved for the painters of the nineteenth century to be the truer nature-students of the *paysage intime.*

CHAPTER 17
Jean Antoine Watteau / William Hogarth

1684 – 1721 — 18th-Century School of France

1697 – 1764 — Early English School

Watteau has been called the first French painter; Hogarth was certainly the first English one. The previous painters in England had been foreigners, such as Holbein, Rubens, Van Dyck Lely, Kneller, visiting the country for a longer or shorter stay. Those preceding Watteau, while French by birth, were altogether foreign in their art. We have seen how the greatest of them, Nicolas Poussin and Claude, lived in Italy and based their respective styles on the study of classic and Italian art and landscape. On the other hand, Lebrun, a pupil of Vouet who had studied in Italy, occupied the position of painter in ordinary at the court of Louis XIV, elaborating vast compositions and designs dictated by the monarch s vanity and intended to extol his fame, representing him as a classic hero and always in the act of conquest. Despite the size of his canvases, Lebrun was not a great painter, and there was nothing distinctively French or original about his work. On the contrary, both these qualities appeared in Watteau, hence the assertion that he is the first of French painters. And this notwithstanding the fact that he was really of Flemish birth, a native of Valenciennes, which had recently, however, become a part of the French dominions.

In his case, as in Hogarth's, a new kind of art sprang into existence, full-grown almost from its birth; both eminently characteristic of their times; the one distinctly French, the other as unmistakably English. Also, it is extremely interesting to note that each artist was, in a greater or less degree, influenced by the sister art of the drama.

Let us try to get an understanding of these two men by first examining the examples of their work. *The Embarkation for Cythera* — the island near which Venus was fabled to have risen from the sea, especially dedicated to her worship — was painted by Watteau upon

his admission to full membership in the French Academy when he was thirty-three years old. It caused a great sensation, being entirely different from the official classic standard maintained by the Academy — "a rainbow-hued vision of beauty and grace, such as had not been seen since the golden days of the Venetian Renaissance"—yet strangely in touch with the French spirit of its own day. For the Grand Monarch had been dead two years, succeeded by his great-grandson Louis XV, a child now seven years old; and under the regency of Philip, Duke of Orleans, the dreary formality of the old court had been replaced by the gaiety of the new. True, the country was plunged in misery, and the shadow of the terrible Revolution which was to burst in the next reign was already drawing near. But at court the people frisked and frolicked, like lambs unmindful of the butcher; pleasure and love-making were their occupations, and Watteau's picture represents the graceful side of all this, detached from its wickedness and inhumanity. Look at the picture — the trees, the water, and the sky all seem real; so, too, the ladies and gentlemen in their rainbow-tinted silks and satins. Yet the scene is also unreal; part of a world in which there is no ugliness, no hunger, no need of work or self-denial; a dream of the poets of old Greece reclothed in the semblance of the eighteenth century. Nor is it only the presence of the cupids that touches this strain of unreality; wreathed, as they are, in joyous circles in mid-air, clinging about the masts of the vessel, or winging their flight through the shrubbery as they summon the human votaries of pleasure. For the gilded vessel is ready to set sail to the isle of happiness, lying somewhere in that dreamy distance; lovers are already aboard, and the rest are being urged to follow. A statue of Venus adorns the woodland spot; yet it is but a symbol of the joy that awaits these pleasure-seekers in the island of dreams — when they reach it.

For it is the beauty of what is not yet attained, of the unattainable, expressed in this picture, that is one of the sources of its poetic unreality; and another is the exquisite pattern of its composition — the spacing of the foreground and the trees against the sky; the rhythmic curving line of moving figures; the delicate varieties of light and shade; and in the original the brilliant harmony of color. All is too absolutely attuned to what is only beautiful to be real; and yet, to

repeat what has been said above, its poetry is based on realism. For "Watteau has this note of a great artist, that as a foundation for his poetry, his dream, his idealism, he lays a constant and minute study of nature."

When Watteau was a lad in Valenciennes he was continually filling his mind with the appearances of things and practising his hand in drawing; especially absorbed on the occasion of the fairs, when the market-place was gay with booths, and mountebanks and actors vied with one another in their antics and gestures. He reached an extraordinary facility in representing figures in action. To this he added from his studies in the Louvre a perfection of coloring derived from Rubens, Titian, and Veronese.

During those days of the Regency the light French comedies were again in favor, and the Italian comedies, which had been banished from the old monarch's court, had been invited back. Once more in the salons and gardens of the Luxembourg sported Gilles (the Italian equivalent of Pierrot), Columbine, Harlequin, Pantaloon, the doctor of Bologna on his donkey, and Polichinello — characters evolved by Italian wit out of their prototypes as played by the Roman mimes. Sometimes the players acted in dumb-show, at other times from written plays, and often with words improvised by themselves, but always with their Italian skill of expression by gesture and facial play, in which they have been rivaled only by French actors and by the Chinese and Japanese. Watteau on some occasions derived his subjects directly from the Italian comedy, as in his famous picture of *Gilles* in the Louvre; but in all his work the indirect influence is plainly visible.

His figures move through the scene as if they were enacting a comedy: in the case of our present picture, a very elaborate spectacle, but of lightest touch; no emotion,' only the daintiest play of fancy; yet in its artistic aspect most serious and accomplished. For Watteau was no trifler; an earnest and indefatigable worker; serious even to sadness, a man of frail physique; nervous, irritable, not fond of company; a looker-on at life, not a sharer in its joys, except in the joy of his own art; and when he painted this vision of loveliness he was already dying of consumption. Note also with regard to his figures that, on the one hand, except in the case of the *Gilles*, they are small.

Therefore we are not concerned with them individually and intimately, but only in relation to the whole scene, in which they play like puppets, creatures of exquisite grace, of easy movement, detached from us, inside the proscenium opening of the gilt frame. On the other hand, note the actual relation of those figures, in point of size, to the landscape. The latter is not subordinated to them, as in the Italian paintings, nor are they mere spots of accent in the surroundings, as in Claude's pictures and in the Dutch landscapes; but the two elements are so adjusted to each other, that, to use a theatrical expression, the *mise-en-scène* is perfectly balanced. It was this balance, coupled with the dramatic vivacity of the figures, which made Watteau's pictures a new thing in art.

Its newness is linked to that of Hogarth's by the influence that the drama exerted over both; otherwise there is no similarity between the two men in motive, though in their craftsmanship they were alike in being both accomplished painters. But while Watteau, as we have said, was a sad, retired man, who found inspiration for his landscape studies in the beautiful gardens of the Luxembourg palace, which he peopled with the creatures of his own imagination, though having all a realist's feeling for, and knowledge of, nature and the human figure; Hogarth, a jovial little man, fond of his London and thoroughly acquainted with its aspects and the life of its people, laid his scenes in the streets, the drawing-rooms, churches, attics, madhouses — always in some scene thronged with the rich, the poor, the actual people living in his day. He neither extenuated, "nor set down aught in malice." But, added to this painter's joy of representing what he saw (and with what minuteness of detail you can see from this picture, remembering, as you study its extreme finish, that Hogarth began life as apprentice to an engraver, and that in after life he engraved a large proportion of his pictures) — added, I say, to this purely pictorial motive is that of telling a story, and one, too, which has a moral.

First of all let us read the story of this picture; or, rather, this Act I of a very serious comedy of six tableaux, entitled *Marriage a la Mode.* The scene is the drawing-room of Viscount Squanderfield (note the allegorical significance of the name); on the left his lordship is seated, pointing with complacent pride to his family tree, which has its roots

in William the Conqueror. But his rent-roll has been squandered, the gouty foot suggesting whither some of it has gone; and to restore his fortunes he is about to marrv his heir to the daughter of a rich alderman. The latter is seated awkwardly at the table, holding the marriage contract, duly sealed, signed, and delivered; the price paid for it being shown by the pile of money on the table and the bunch of canceled mortgages which the lawyer is presenting to the nobleman, who, as you observe, refuses to soil his elegant fingers with them. Over on the left is his weakling son, helping himself at this critical turn of his affairs to a pinch of snuff, while he gazes admiringly at his own figure in a mirror. The lady is equally indifferent: she has strung the ring on to her handkerchief and is toying with it, while she listens to the compliments being paid to her by Counselor Silvertongue. Through the open window another lawyer is comparing his lordship's new house that is in course of building with the plan in his hand. A marriage so begun could only end in misery; and the successive stages of it are represented in the following five pictures of this famous series, which was issued in engraved form in 1745.

Of this masterpiece of Hogarth's, considered as the gradual unfolding, tableau by tableau, of a dramatic story, Austin Dobson writes: "There is no defect of invention, no superfluity of detail, no purposeless stroke in the whole tale. From first to last, it progresses steadily to its catastrophe by a forward march of skilfully linked and fully developed incidents, set in an atmosphere that makes it as vivid as nature itself, decorated with surprising fidelity, and enlivened by all the resources of the keenest humor." This is very high praise; but, observe, there is not a word in it which would be inapplicable if it were a play or a novel and not a series of pictures, that Mr. Dobson were criticizing. As Hogarth was not a dramatist or novelist, but a painter, we need some further indorsement. Let Gautier, the French critic, speak: "Throughout the *Marriage a la Mode* series Hogarth perfectly merits the name of a great painter." Compare with this an extract from the writings of the American critic, Mr. John C. Van Dyke: "There can be no doubt that Hogarth's instincts were those of a painter. His feeling for color, air, values, his handling of the brush, his sense of delicacy and refinement in the placing of tones, all mark him as an artist whose medium of expression was necessarily pigment.





Top: The Embarkation for Cythera, Antoine Watteau
Bottom: The Marriage Contract, William Hogarth

The fact that his audience applauded him for his satires rather than for his painting does not invalidate the excellence of his art." And many other judgments to the same effect could be quoted.

So it is because Hogarth was distinguished by these qualities, which are among the hall-marks of painting, that he is reckoned a great painter; and because he was the first of Englishmen to be thus distinguished, and the subjects of his pictures are character studies of life in England, that he is considered the first of the English painters. For similar reasons, Watteau is called the first of the French painters.

The difference between the art of these two contemporaries, each representative of his race and period, is most interesting. The Gallic genius, influenced by intellectuality, seeks in each branch of art its separate special perfection; while the Anglo-Saxon, like the German, mixes sentiment with his abstract love of beauty: a sentiment either of emotions or imagination, of morality or religion. The Frenchman does not, as a rule, confuse his mediums of expression: that is to say, what can best be said in words, he leaves to literature; and, when through painting or sculpture he makes an appeal to the eye, it is to the eye, as far as possible, exclusively, that he is wont to appeal. There are many exceptions to this in French painting, the very popular Greuze being one; but, as a rule, the racial genius of the French is displayed in bringing to the highest point of perfection the special capabilities of the medium, whether in words, or paint, or what not. On the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon and the German, moved by sentiment, are apt to use their art to get at the sentiment of their fellow-men; quite as intent upon what they wish to say as upon their mode of saying it; sometimes more so. They will borrow, therefore, from other arts, as Hogarth did from those of the satirist and dramatist, and, we may add, of the preacher and the moralist.

To this ruling difference between the genius of these races there are numberless exceptions, yet the essential difference remains and must be grasped by all who would appreciate fairly the merits of both. Nor need we try to discover which is the better motive. To the French, their own undoubtedly, because it is fashioned out of their own characteristics. A heritage from Poussin, it has resulted in a very high average of accomplishment; so that no writers are more clever in writing than the French; no painters so generally skilled in

painting; no sculptors, as a body, so expert in their particular craft.

On the contrary, while individual painters of the German and Anglo-Saxon races have regarded themselves primarily as painters and reached a high degree of accomplishment in their technic, there has been a tendency to think the subject of the picture of more importance than the way in which it is painted, and the latter has suffered in consequence. Hogarth, as we have seen, was not one of these; yet the admiration given to the story-telling and moral aspects of his work has done much to lead other painters to overlook the proper scope of painting, its true possibilities and limitations.

He himself was a perfectly typical product of his time, reflecting at least four very vital influences: Puritan morality; the power and independence of the middle classes; the love of the drama, and the rise of English prose.

The first two are closely interwoven. At the commencement of the eighteenth century there was this great difference between the conditions of England and France, that while in the latter the opposite extremes of the aristocracy and the proletariat stood wide apart, in England there was a powerful and independent middle class. It had its origin in the fifteenth century, when the mutual destruction of the nobles in the Wars of the Roses "gave honest men," as the saying was, "a chance to come by their own." It grew in numbers and in wealth, eagerly identifying itself with freedom of thought and speech, until by the seventeenth century it had developed that Puritan conscience which made a stand at once for morality and for religious and civil liberty. It was temporarily triumphant and then superseded in the matter of government by the Restoration, when lower moral standards and indifference to religion came to be in vogue. But the Puritan conscience survived, as it still does to-day; and in Hogarth's time made itself felt in a variety of ways. In a religious guise it reappeared in the preaching of John Wesley, and the rise of the Methodists; in literature, in the satirical writing of Swift, Addison, Steele, and Pope.

But the great event of literature during the latter part of the eighteenth century was the development and growth of English prose, particularly, in connection with our present study, of the modern novel. There sprang up a group of story-tellers: De Foe, Richardson,

Goldsmith, Fielding, Sterne, and Smollett. Literature, seriously, humorously, or satirically, was interested in human life. The Puritan conscience, the sturdy middleclass common sense, the novelist's keen observation of life, tinged sometimes with bitterness, but always with humor — these are the influences to be detected in Hogarth's work.

Its affinity to the drama is no less evident. The figures are grouped in a scene rather than composed with the empty spaces of the background. They are strung across the scene, almost in the same plane, and are illuminated as if from footlights, the light of which does not explore the background. To appreciate this artificial form of grouping and lighting, the picture should be compared with Velasquez's *Las Meñinas.* In a moment we perceive that one is natural, and the other stagy.

In his portrait of himself, in the National Gallery in London, Hogarth has introduced a palette, on which is drawn a curved line. This is what he called the line of beauty and of grace. One may possibly trace his use of it in this picture: in the gesture of the right arm and hand of the heir; in the curve of the lady's pocket handkerchief; more subtly through the line of her head and the hands of the Counselor Silvertongue; with a certain broken humility in the head and left arm of the lawyer who hands the mortgages, and with a pompous stiffness in the head and left arm of his lordship.

In his early efforts at painting, Hogarth produced miniature "Conversation Pieces"; that is to say, little subjects of figures grouped in the act of conversation: a style of picture which, as he said, had novelty. It was akin to the genre pictures, those subjects of real life which had occupied the Dutch of the seventeenth century. But there was this difference. The Dutch artists, depicting scenes of real life in the home, or streets, or taverns, were concerned almost entirely with the pictorial aspect of the subject; they did not include, as a rule, any study of character, much less any story-telling or dramatic motive. They looked at the outside, not the inside, of life. Hogarth was the first of the painters to do the latter. In his objective realism he is related to Dutch seventeenth-century art; but, under the influence of English literature of the eighteenth century, he went further and originated a new motive in painting. While Italian art in the eighteenth century was variously reproducing a faint recollection of its

past, Holland itself aping the Italian, and Watteau shrinking from the present in a golden vision of dreams, Hogarth attacked the real. He is the father of modern realism in painting.

The great difference, then, between him and Watteau is that his pictures represent a study of character which analyzes the causes and results of human actions, while the French artist floats upon the beautiful surface of things. The one is terrible, seeing the world so clearly as it was; the other, altogether lovable in his disregard of what is gross and horrible, in his imagined perfection of beauty. But, in relation to the respective conditions of their countries at the time, Watteau's art was as a tangle of flowers, covering pleasantly a bottomless pit of destruction; Hogarth's, a rude awakening to a wholesomer condition; the one, a sad and sick man's craving after ideal beauty; the other, a healthy recognition of what was wrong.

CHAPTER 18
Sir Joshua Reynolds / Thomas Gainsborough

1723 – 1792 — Early English School

1727 – 1788 — Early English School

In the same year, 1784, that Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture, *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse*, was exhibited at the Royal Academy, the famous actress sat for her portrait to his rival, Gainsborough. Sarah Siddons was then in her twenty-ninth year, in the prime of her beauty, and in the first flush of that popularity which was to make her the queen of the English stage for thirty years. She was the eldest daughter of a country actor, Roger Kemble, three of her brothers, John Philip, Stephen, and Charles, and one sister, Elizabeth, being also distinguished on the stage; while Charles's daughter, Fanny Kemble, carried on the theatrical traditions of the family until 1893. As a girl, Sarah acted in her father's companies; at eighteen married an actor named Siddons; and made her first appearance at Drury Lane Theatre in 1775, when she played Portia with Garrick. But on this occasion she failed to make a good impression, and retired in disappointment to the provinces, where she worked hard for seven years. Upon her reappearance in London in 1782, as Isabella in "The Fatal Marriage," her success was instantaneous. She became identified with parts of tragic pathos and queenly dignity, her favorite ones being Lady Macbeth, Queen Constance, Queen Katharine, Jane Shore, Isabella, Ophelia, Imogen, Portia, and Desdemona. Her power seems to have consisted not so much in the delivery of the words as in her "presence, mien, attitude, expression of voice and countenance, and in her intense concentration of feeling, which lifted and dilated her form, transporting her audience as well as herself." Her last appearance on the stage was in 1818. Thenceforth until her death, in 1831, she lived in retirement, as honored as a woman as she had been as an actress.

We can compare the two aspects of her personality in these

pictures. Sir Joshua's exhibits her in an attitude of rapt contemplation, as if gazing into the world of the imagination and listening for the voice of inspiration; dressed in a costume which at the end of the eighteenth century passed for heroic. In Gainsborough's picture she appears as she may have done when Fanny Burney met her, in 1782, while paying an afternoon call at a friend's house. Mrs. Siddons had just become famous. She was on everybody's tongue, and Miss Burney makes this entry in her diary: "We found Mrs. Siddons, the actress, there. She is a woman of excellent character, and therefore I am very glad she is thus patronized. She behaved with great propriety; very calm, modest, quiet, and unaffected. She has a fine countenance, and her eyes look both intelligent and soft. She has, however, a steadiness in her manner and deportment by no means engaging. Mrs. Thrale, who was there, said: 'Why, this is a leaden goddess we are all worshipping! however, we shall soon gild it.'"

Her hair is frizzled and powdered after the fashion of the time, and surmounted by a large black, feathered hat; she wears a blue-and-gray-striped silk dress, with a buff shawl hanging from her arm, and holds a brown muff. The curtain at her back is red. On this arrangement of colors hangs a tale.

Sir Joshua, in the eighth of the discourses which, as president of the Royal Academy, he delivered to the students in 1778, laid down the principle that the chief masses of light in a picture should always be of warm, mellow color, and that the blue, gray, or green colors should be kept almost entirely out of these masses, and "be used only to support and set off these warm colors; and for this purpose a small proportion of cold colors will be sufficient. Let this conduct be reversed," he added; "let the light be cold and the surrounding colors warm, as we often see in the work of the Roman and Florentine painters, and it will be out of the power of art, even in the hands of Rubens or Titian, to make a picture splendid and harmonious."

It is said that Gainsborough took up the challenge and produced the *Mrs. Siddons* portrait; though others assert that it was in another famous portrait, *The Blue Boy,* that he did this. Whether or not it is true that he deliberately painted these pictures to refute his rival's theory, matters very little beside the fact that they do refute it. For one of the chief charms of Gainsborough's work is the delicacy of his

color-harmonies, in which he was entirely original. But this story brings out very sharply the difference between these two artists: Reynolds regulating his art and life on safe and arbitrary principles; Gainsborough, an original student of nature, influenced by a dreamy, poetic temperament; the one, also, a man of the world; the other, simply an artist.

Sir Joshua was born at Plympton, four miles from Plymouth, in Devonshire, in 1723. His father, rector of the grammar-school, early trained him in classical studies, intending his son to be an apothecary; but he displayed such an inclination for drawing, diligently copying the prints which fell in his way, that the father yielded and sent him to London as a pupil of Hudson, then popular but now held in little esteem. After two years he returned to Devonshire and established himself as a portrait-painter in Plymouth, where he was taken up by Commodore Keppel, who, being appointed to the Mediterranean station, invited the young painter to accompany him on his ship, the *Centurion*. Thus he was able to visit Rome, spending two years there in very close study, especially of the works of Raphael and Michelangelo. It was while painting in the corridors of the Vatican that he contracted a cold, which brought on the deafness which afflicted him during the rest of his life. Leaving Rome, he visited Parma, where he fell under Correggio's influence; then Florence and Venice, in the latter city studying the works of the great colorists. On his way home he stopped in Paris, making acquaintance with the work of Rubens. Arrived in London, he settled in St. Martin's Lane, and painted a portrait of his patron. Commodore (by that time Lord) Keppel, which laid the foundation of his fortunes. Later he established himself in Leicester Square, where his house. No. 47, may still be seen opposite the site of Hogarth's.

Van Dyck had been dead a hundred years. Though his memory was a great tradition in England, no Englishman had succeeded to his fame, and yet portraiture was the trend of painting that chiefly interested the English. Reynolds, coming back from his travels with well-considered rules which he would follow if it were possible for him to paint historical or ideal subjects, immediately adapted himself to circumstances and applied these rules to portrait-painting. Every portrait should be a picture as well as a rendering of the features of

the original. He had learned how Michelangelo made the attitude and gestures of his figures so full of expression; what triumphs of light and shade were produced by Correggio; the dignity and sumptuousness of Venetian coloring; the decorative splendor of Rubens's pictures; the exquisite sentiment of Raphael's women and children, and the dignity that this artist gave to his heads of men. He had learned all this and much more, and set himself to combine as much of these different qualities in his portraits as he could. "No one," said James Northcote, a pupil of Reynolds, who wrote his life, "ever appropriated the ideas of others to his own purpose with more skill than Sir Joshua. The opinion he has given of Raphael may with equal justice be applied to himself: 'His materials were generally borrowed, but the noble structure was his own.'"

For example, in the *Mrs. Siddons* the pose of the figure, especially in the carriage of the head and left arm and hand, recalls Michelangelo's painting of *Isaiah* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; while in the latter's *Jeremiah* may be seen the suggestion for the attendant figures, *Crime* and *Remorse*, in the Reynolds picture. If you compare the *Siddons* and the *Isaiah*, you will be conscious at once of particular similarities and yet of general difference. Each figure is represented as being under the influence of inspiration, as if listening to a voice. The latter in the case of the Isaiah is near, in that of the *Siddons* afar off; the prophet is *taking it into* himself to write it in the book; the actress, with her right arm extended, looks as if she may spring from her seat and impetuously give out of herself what she feels. Then note the different treatment of the draperies: in the *Isaiah* it is sculptural, the drapery is felt as part of the figure; in the Siddons it is arranged so as to make you forget the figure in the amplitude and superbness of its garniture, just as the actual personality of a great actress is enlarged and made magnificent by the atmosphere of emotion which surrounds it. It was so that Reynolds, intimate friend of the great actor Garrick and of the brilliant orator Burke, tried to represent the mighty impressiveness, the emotional grandeur, and intellectual splendor of the nobly spoken word. Throughout all Reynolds's work there is a strong inclination toward the dramatic representation: even the children — and none ever painted sweeter ones than he — unconsciously play some little part. Moreover, Reynolds lived in the



Top: Portrait of Mrs. Siddons, Thomas Gainsborough
Bottom: Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse, Sir Joshua

grand world, and painted all the great and the fashionable people of his time; and sought to apply to portraiture the principles of the "grand style" of painting.

Look back to Gainsborough's *Mrs. Siddons,* and see how free from anything dramatic or "grand" it is; how simple and straightforward; true and sure in the drawing, so that one can enjoy the suggestion of vigorous, alert body and soft, firm flesh. It gives enjoyment to our tactile sense, which is much less excited by the Reynolds picture. On the other hand, quite as noticeable is the delicacy of the picture: its delicate refinement of expression and the delicate rendering of the face and hair; while we have already alluded to the choice and original beauty of the scheme of color-harmony. Altogether there is a rare quality of distinction in this picture which we shall not find in the Reynolds, for all its grandeur. It is also a much finer kind of distinction than appears in Van Dyck's pictures; and I think we may discover why.

This quality of distinction in a picture is not so much a reproduction of something in the subject as of something in the artist; else we might expect to find it as evident in Reynolds's picture as in Gainsborough's. No, you may find this quality also in a painted landscape; it is an expression of the mind and imagination of the artist, even as the touch of a musician is an interpretation not only of the music, but of the way in which the music affects him — an expression of himself, in fact.

Now Van Dyck, as we have seen, was very fond of the grand world and fashionable fife, and, having great personal refinement, gave an air of exceptional refinement to his portraits; but it is very largely a refinement of beautiful clothes and elegant manners. We can hardly imagine Van Dyck condescending to paint a picture of a *Girl and Pigs*, as Gainsborough did; and he certainly did not paint landscapes — whereas Gainsborough, while painting portraits for a living, painted landscapes for his own pleasure, and lived at Hampstead during the summer, that he might be constantly in fellowship with nature.

It was this love of nature and of simple things, and the faculty of seeing beauty in them, that gave such a choice distinction to his work, because it was the expression of his own simple, lovable personality. He had beauty in himself, and all his life it fed on simple

delights — the joy of nature, of domestic happiness, of music, and of his own art.

He was born in the little town of Sudbury, on the river Stour, in the beautiful county of Suffolk, not far from East Bergholt, the birthplace, some fifty years later, of the great landscape-painter Constable. As a boy, he loved to ramble in the country, sketching; and showed so much inclination for it, and so little for any other kind of study, that when he was fifteen he was sent to London and placed under the care of a silversmith, who procured him admission to the St. Martin's Lane Academy. Here he worked for three years under the painter Frank Hayman, who was distinguished by being addicted more to wine and pugilism than to art. Gainsborough's eighteenth year was an eventful one. First, he hired three rooms in Hatton Gardens and set up as a painter on his own account; then, meeting with little encouragement, returned to Sudbury; there fell a victim to the charms of a young lady of seventeen, Miss Margaret Burr, who had an annuity of one thousand dollars; married her, and established himself in the country town of Ipswich. After this eventful year, he worked on for fifteen years happily and quietly, continually studying in the open air and executing such small commissions for portraits as came to him, until he had succeeded in discovering for himself a manner of painting suited to his needs, and had developed an extraordinary facility.

In 1760, by the advice of a friend and patron named Thicknesse, he moved to Bath, at that time the most fashionable city outside of London. Its hot medicinal waters had been famous in Roman times, and still the gay world congregated there to drink them and to dance and talk scandal in the Pump-room, where Beau Nash reigned as an autocrat among the wits and macaronis.[19]

Gainsborough's success was immediate, but with increasing wealth there was no alteration in his simple method of living. He worked four or five hours a day, and devoted the rest of his time to the society of his wife and a few friends who were musical. For music now became a passion of his life, so that it was said he painted for business and played for pleasure, constantly mastering some fresh instrument.

[19] Slang word for the fashionable dandies of the day.

So passed fourteen years, when, in 1774, Gainsborough moved to London, was commissioned by George III to paint a portrait of himself and the queen, and became the rival of Reynolds. He died in 1788, having contracted a chill while attending the trial of Warren Hastings, and was buried by his own request in Kew churchyard. On his death-bed he sent for Reynolds. There had been misunderstanding and estrangement between the two. It was now forgotten. Reynolds caught his last dying words, "We are all going to heaven, and Van Dyck is of the party"; acted as one of the pallbearers at his funeral; and subsequently pronounced a eulogy. In it he said: "If ever this nation should produce genius enough to acquire to us the honorable distinction of an English school, the name of Gainsborough will be transmitted to posterity in the history of the art, among the very first of that rising name."

Reynolds himself only survived Gainsborough four years. He was buried with much pomp in St. Paul's Cathedral, near to the grave of its architect. Sir Christopher Wren.

The contrast between these two artists is almost the difference between art and artlessness. Reynolds was learned in what other painters had done, and had reduced his own art to a system; he was a man of the world, and represented his subjects with a well-bred consciousness of good manners. Gainsborough found out almost everything for himself; never lost the simple, natural way of looking at things and people, and painted, not according to rule, but at the dictates of what he felt. Reynolds planned out his effects; Gainsborough painted on the spur of the impression which the subject aroused. Reynolds's art was based on safe general principles; Gainsborough's was the fresh and spontaneous expression of his temperament — depending, that is to say, on feeling rather than on calculation. His temperament, or habit of mind, was dreamy and poetic, gentle and retiring, including a small range of experience. Reynolds, on the other hand, was a man of large experience and of business capacity; intimate with Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, and other celebrities of the day; a man of knowledge and clever conversational power, whose pictures by their variety prove his versatility. Consequently, when the Royal Academy was established in 1768, he was elected president by acclamation, and was knighted

by George III, an honor that has ever since been bestowed on the holder of this office.

These two men were at the head of the group of portrait-painters who, in the latter part of the eighteenth century and early years of the succeeding one, added luster to the new growth of art in England. Foremost among the other names in the group are Romney, at times quite as able as Reynolds or Gainsborough; Sir Henry Raeburn, a Scotchman; John Hoppner; and Sir Thomas Lawrence.

CHAPTER 19
John Constable / Joseph Mallord William Turner

1776 – 1837	1775 – 1851
English School	English School

What a contrast these pictures present of splendid audacity and serene simplicity! The one an amazing vision of the imagination; the other, a loving record of something intimately familiar. Turner's was painted in 1829; one of the finest works of this master, who is a solitary figure in landscape art, unapproached by others, although, as we shall see, he combined several motives that others had been or would be seeking after. Constable's picture appeared six years later, an excellent example of the painter who may be regarded as the father of modern landscape.

The Valley Farm, known also as *Willy Lott's House,* is on the little river Stour in the county of Sussex, England, near the mill at East Bergholt where Constable was born; for he, like Rembrandt, was a miller's son. It is a characteristic bit of English scenery, not grand or romantic; just a tiny bit of a little country the conspicuous features of which are its verdure and rich cultivation; so homelike that those who love it, as Constable did, get to have a companionship with every detail, learning to know the line of its hills, the winding of its streams, and the position and character of every tree and object in the familiar scene. It was along the banks of this little river that he strayed in boyhood; and to it that he came back, after a stay in London where he studied at the schools of the Royal Academy, and copied the pictures in the galleries, especially those of Hobbema and Ruisdael. But he soon tired of looking at nature through the eyes of other men. "There is room enough," he wrote to a friend, "for a nature-painter. Painting is with me but another name for feeling; and I associate my careless boyhood with all that lies upon the banks of the Stour; those scenes made me a painter and I am thankful." This is the kind of spirit which, we have seen, actuated the Dutch landscape-painters of the

seventeenth century; and, indeed, their love of nature was reincarnated in Constable. For in the lapse of time their contribution to art had been forgotten; the Dutchmen themselves had followed after strange gods, and, like the painters of France and England, had forsaken the direct study of nature for an attempt to reproduce the grandeur of the classic landscape. Reynolds, who drew his inspiration from Italy, had set its stamp upon English portraiture; and Claude, the Italian-Frenchman, was the landscape-painter most admired.

If we compare this picture of Constable's with the *Landing of Cleopatra at Tarsus* by Claude, we shall note how wide apart they are. Beside the formal stateliness of the latter, wherein everything, carefully selected from various sources, has been arranged so as to produce a noble effect, *The Valley Farm* seems huddled and formless, homely. For Constable rejected the rules of composition then in vogue, to build up an artificial stateliness, painting the scene as he saw it, with a native instinct for balance of the full and empty spaces. Again, if we compare it with Hobbema's *The Avenue, Middelharnis,* we shall note that, while both are simple records of the natural countryside, there is a difference. We can detect a movement of the foliage of the trees in Constable's which is not in Hobbema's picture; we perceive more than the actual forms of the trees, they are alive, trembling in the air. Further, we may observe more suggestion of atmosphere in the later than in the earlier picture; the sky is less a background than a canopy, the air of which pervades the whole scene. Once more, there is a marked difference between the feeling of these two pictures; that is to say, we may note a difference in the attitude of mind with which Hobbema and Constable, respectively, approached their subject. We have no doubt that each was in love with his subject, and painted it because he was; but Hobbema did not think it necessary to say so in his picture. He viewed his subject objectively, as something outside himself; whereas Constable, with whom "painting was another name for feeling," has put his love into the picture, has made the scene interpret his own mood. His picture is subjective.

He was not satisfied with a copying of nature. It was to him so real and personal a companion, that, in the first place, he tried to make it live in his pictures; that the clouds might move and overhang

the spot, that its atmosphere might penetrate every part of the scene, and that trees and water, and the very plants by the roadside might move and have their being in it; and secondly, he put his own personal affection into his representation. Then, too, in the matter of color, which cannot be gathered from the reproduction, he dared to paint nature green, as he saw it, and the skies blue, with the sunshine either yellow or glaring white. This scandalized the people of his day. "Where are you going to place your brown tree?" said a patron of his, speaking of an unfinished picture. For the older men, even Gainsborough to some extent, transposed the hues of nature into browns and grays and gold, producing a very charming harmony of tone, but one that was arbitrary; not true to nature's facts, but adopted as a pictorial convention.

It is, then, because of this closer fidelity to the hues of nature, and to the effects of movement, of atmosphere and of light, which are the manifestations of its life and moods, and because he interpreted nature according to his own mood — was, in fact, the first of the temperamental landscape-painters — that Constable is called the father of modern landscape. For these are the qualities that particularly have occupied the artists of the nineteenth century, and have caused the most original and vital branch of painting at the present time to be that of landscape.

On the threshold of this new movement stood Turner, alone among his fellow landscape-painters, the most imaginative of them all, who was less concerned with the truth of nature than with her splendors and magic. No one has equaled him in suggesting the mystery of nature in its sublime forms. One turns to the *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus*, not to be drawn toward it and made to feel at home, as in the case of the Constable, but to be lifted up and filled with wonder of its strangeness and mysterious grandeur.

The incident depicted in it is from Homer's Odyssey. The hero, Ulysses, in his voyage from Troy to his home in Ithaca, stopped at the isle of the Cyclops, and with his followers approached the cave of Polyphemus. The monster devoured six of the crew; but the hero plied him with wine, brought from his vessel, and, while he slept, put out his single eye by gouging it with a red-hot stake. The mariners then escaped to their ship, while Polyphemus in his pain and

impotent rage flung rocks in the direction of their voices. We see his huge form writhing on the top of the cliff; the sailors scrambling up the masts to loosen the sails; the red oars flashing upon the water; a bevy of sea-nymphs around the prow drawing the ship to safety through the green water; the latter, gilded with the reflections of the rising sun, that paints with gold and crimson the little clouds, floating in the vaporous sky, wherein are rifts which reveal further depths of blue.

But really the incident was of very little account to Turner, except as it furnished him with a peg upon which to hang the splendors of his own imagination; far enough away from our actual experience to permit him a perfect liberty of treatment. Fourteen years earlier he had painted *Dido Building Carthage,* in which he emulated the liberties that Claude had taken with nature. It lacked the purity of coloring of the latter's work, yet its composition revealed Claude's mannered elevation of style, and served to show that, if he were so minded. Turner could compete with the landscape-artist then held in highest repute. But his mind was set upon further things; having proved that he could rival Claude, he would now be Turner — himself. At this time he paid the first of three visits to Italy, and the picture we are studying, painted after his return, reveals a heightened sense of color, and the magnificence of his imagination, probably, at its highest point.

A man may shut himself up in his house and lead a very solitary life, as Turner did, and yet unconsciously be a part of the influences of his time. And those early years of the nineteenth century were a period of reaction against the eighteenth century reign of prose, its cold calculation and small and elegant precision. The spirit of Romanticism was in the air. It is not usual, however, to regard Turner as a Romantic painter, yet his work combines qualities which reappear more distinctly in other men. We shall consider the Romantic movement in painting in another chapter; meanwhile here are two definitions of it, that will include Turner, as having, at least, romantic tendencies. Walter Pater says, "It is the addition of strangeness to beauty that constitutes the romantic character in art"; again, Dr. F. H. Hedge, "The romantic feeling has its origin in wonder and mystery. It is the sense of something hidden, of imperfect revelation."

The mystery of this picture, its spaces of light and darkness, that the eye explores but cannot fathom, we are conscious of at once. Moreover, when we think about it, we are sure that, if our eye could pierce the shadows and closely discern the formation of the rocks, definitely learn the structure of the ship and the appearance of its sailors, peer into the distance and discover exactly how each mass of cliff succeeds another — if, in a word, our eye could grasp everything and convey the facts distinctly to our understanding, we should not enjoy the picture as we do. It is the sense of something hidden, of imperfect revelation, that is one of the sources of its enjoyment.

And then the strangeness of the picture — that arch of rock, an actual aspect of nature, though an unusual one; the huge, roughly hewn figure of Polyphemus; a sky, full of surprises to people who seldom see the daily pageantry of sunrise — but it is less in detail than in general character that the picture is strange. The artist has taken a theme of old times, when the world was young and things loomed very big to its unformed imagination. For to the ancient child-mind the world seemed very big, and its empty, unexplored spaces, peopled with shapes and fancies that were vague and large. Whether it was the myths of old Greece, or those of the Norse mountains, or German forests — the earliest ones are concerned with personages vast in size, only half formed in shape, vague and elementary; and it is the suggestion of this vastness and shapelessness, of the early beginning of things, this great strangeness, in a word, that helps to make the present picture so impressive.

Once more compare it with Constable's. One is part of a vast new world; the other, a little spot that for ages the hand and heart of man have shaped.

Whether Turner felt toward nature the wonder which his pictures inspire in us, may be doubted. His life was a strange contradiction to the splendor and imagination of his work. Like many other great landscape-artists he was city-bred. The son of a barber in London, he early showed a talent for drawing, and the father hung the child's productions on the wall of his shop and sold them to his customers. By degrees the boy obtained employment in coloring architectural designs, and at fourteen was entered as a pupil in the schools of the Royal Academy. The following year he exhibited his





Top: Valley Farm (Willy Lott's House), John Constable
Bottom: Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus,
Joseph Mallord William Turner

first picture. He worked with indefatigable energy, and during vacations went on walking tours, sketching continually and painting in water-colors; so that, by the time he was twenty-four and admitted as an associate to the Academy, he had exhibited pictures which ranged over twenty-six counties of England and Wales. During this early period his most conspicuous success was made in water-color, in which medium he developed an extraordinary facility and skill. He would brook no rivalry. Girtin was at that time the most admired artist in watercolor; he set to work to surpass him. Having done so, he practically abandoned this medium for oil-colors, and then threw down, as we have already noted, a gauntlet to the popular admiration for Claude. That artist had published a "Liber Veritatis." Turner would outrival him with a "Liber Studiorum," though the drawings, engraved under the artist's supervision, were not studies but finished water-color pictures. In fact, this collection of seventy-one out of the hundred plates originally planned, while a monument to Turner's genius, is also the assertion of a rivalry that, in itself unworthy, was conducted in a spirit scarcely fair. For Claude's "Liber Veritatis" is simply a sketch-book, and the sketches were engraved after their author's death, indeed, not until Turner's day. But the latter's finished productions were issued under his own eye.

Turner's rule of conduct, in fact, was "aut Ceasar aut nullus." Having established his supremacy over rivals, at least to his own satisfaction, he set himself to conquer a universe of his own. During a period of twelve years, beginning with this picture of Ulysses and ending with that of a tug-boat towing to a wrecker's yard a ship of the line, *The Fighting Téméraire,* and *The Burial of Wilkie at Sea,* he did his greatest work. For then his imagination was at its ripest and richest; displayed particularly in the majesty of moving depths of water, in skies of vast grandeur, and in the splendor of his color-schemes; moreover, the workmanship of his pictures was solid, and he still based his imagination on the facts of nature. But, as time went on, the need of continual experimenting — which every genius feels — seemed to take undue possession of him, so that the study of nature became constantly less and the independent invention more and more. It was no longer the forms of nature that interested him, but her impalpable qualities of light and atmosphere, and perhaps even

more the intoxication of the actual skill in using paint, until one may suspect that he was more enamoured of the magic of his brush and paints than of the qualities of nature which he was supposed to be representing. So daring, almost to the point of recklessness, were his experiments, that his later pictures have deteriorated, until their original appearance can only be guessed. On the other hand, in his fondness for atmospheric effects, and particularly in his efforts to raise the key of light in his pictures, he was anticipating, as we shall see, some of the most interesting developments of nineteenth-century painting.

And during all these years, while as an artist he was absorbed in the pageants, the mystery, and the subtlety of. light and atmosphere, his life as a man was morose and mean; his house in Queen Anne Street dirty and neglected; and, finally, it was in a still more squalid haunt in a wretched part of London, which he frequented by his own choice, that he was found dead. When his will was opened, the curious contradiction that he was fond of hoarding money and yet refused to sell the majority of his pictures, was explained. He had left his works to the National Gallery, his money as a fund for the relief of poor artists. A strange mingling of greatness and sordidness, of boorish manners and kindly humanness!

Constable, on the other hand, led a happy, simple life in the village of which he wrote in one of his letters, published by his friend, the painter Leslie, "I love every stile and stump and lane." It was an out-of-door life, for he painted, as he expressed it, "under the sun"; observing the big clouds as they rolled inland from the North Sea, with their attendant effects of light and shadow. For it is these shadow effects of the northern countries that have made them the home of the natural landscape. In sunny Italy, where the air is for the most part bright and clear, the landscape makes an appeal of lines and masses; the artist finds in it suggestion for composition, hence the stately pictures by Nicolas Poussin and Claude, who lived in Italy, and of the English Wilson, who visited Italy and saw nature through the Italian influence.

But in a country where the sunshine is comparatively rare, Constable learned to appreciate the value of it; the ample comfort of its occasional breadth, the subtle charm of its brief gleams, piercing

the rain-cloud and sparkling upon the grass and leafage. The sky, not spread with an undisturbed ceiling of light, but built high with clouds, that shift continually and change their aspects, taught him to observe the varying luminosity of the atmosphere; not to take light for granted, or to represent it by some uniform recipe for glow, but to study the infinite variety of its manifestations — with what degrees of strength or faintness it saturates the air, and how it colors the objects upon the ground.

Constable became, in fact, the first of the modern school of open-air painting. Some of his pictures were exhibited at the Paris Salon during the years 1822 to 1827, and the interest that his work aroused and the impression produced by it are to be reckoned, as Delacroix himself affirmed, a powerful influence in the creation of the French school of *paysage intime*. The Englishmen, however, of that date, paid Constable little honor. It is true he was made an associate of the Royal Academy in 1819, after which he moved from Suffolk and established himself in what was then the village of Hampstead on the northern outskirts of London; but it was not until he had been honored with a gold medal by the French that the Academy admitted him to full membership. Nor did this increase the public's appreciation; he died at Hampstead in very meager circumstances, but with the happy expectation that some day his pictures would be understood and valued. The expectation has been fully realized.

Such tardy recognition has been the lot of many painters great enough to create something new. Turner would not have been so highly esteemed in his own generation, but that Ruskin, the most admired writer upon art in his time, was his enthusiastic advocate, extolling him, indeed, with an extravagant enthusiasm that has been followed by a reaction. Ruskin claimed for him every virtue of a painter; and the later discovery, that he was not so great as his advocate claimed, has somewhat obscured how great he was.

Moreover, the world has now become so persuaded of the beauty of the natural style of landscape-painting, that it is distrustful of the imaginative. In its praise of Constable it pooh-poohs Turner.

This is a foolish and ignorant attitude of mind. The proper one for the genuine student is to recognize that in art, as in any other department of life, a man should be judged, not by standards of

measurement, but by what he himself is. Now to a man who loves nature Constable must appeal; but where is the man whose love of nature, being simple and real, has not, once or twice or oftener, felt taken out of himself, so that the facts of sky and earth seemed little to him beside the wonderful exaltation of spirit that the same suggest? It may be on some mountain, or in the presence of a sunset, or beside a little brook, anywhere, at any time, but some time or other to the lover of nature will come a moment in which the facts of the landscape are swept into forgetfulness, and all he is conscious of is a sense of his soul being strengthened, purified, exalted. It is so that Turner's best pictures may affect him.

As we approach the development of modern art, we become more and more involved in the question of nature-study. But let us realize that nature is practically the same to-day, yesterday, and forever; it is our own attitude toward it which is variable. Nature is a mirror in which the artist and ourselves are reflected. Therefore, it would be just as foolish to affirm that a mirror should reflect only such and such objects, as to limit our appreciation to particular kinds of artistic motive. The proper attitude of mind is one of being actively ready to receive impressions of all kinds.

CHAPTER 20

Jacques Louis David / Ferdinand Victor Eugene Delacroix

1748 – 1825	1799 – 1863
Classical School of France	Romantic School of France

Each of these pictures — David's *Oath of the Horatii* and Delacroix's *Dante and Virgil* — represents a breaking away from what had gone before. David's was a protest against the art of Watteau and his successors, Van Loo, Boucher, and Fragonard; Delacroix's, in turn, a protest against the art of David. The one was an attempt to revive the purity of Classic style by going even further back than Poussin, namely to the ancient Roman sculpture itself; the other, to express the fervor of modern life through the medium of romance. David's picture is cold, calculated, and self-conscious; Delacroix's impassioned, less formal in arrangement, the characters being absorbed in their various emotions.

Compare the two pictures, first of all, from the standpoint of their subjects, in each case a dramatic one: David's drawn from the early days of the Roman Republic, Delacroix's from Dante's "Inferno." And, first, the David. Jealous of the growing power of the young city, the neighboring tribe of Curiatii has invested it; Rome's very existence is imperiled. There are three brothers in the ranks of the enemy who, like Goliath in the Bible story, march up and down in front of their comrades, challenging any three Romans to fight with them. Let a combat of three against three decide the issue. Now within the walls is one Horatius, who has three stout sons. He will give them up, sacrifice them if need be, as champions of the Republic. They are eager for the honor, notwithstanding that their own sister is betrothed to one of the three Curiatii. But between their loyalty to country and to sister they have no hesitation. They will fight for country; and to this highest of all purposes the father with prayer and blessings devotes them.

But observe the three brothers in the picture. Their attitudes are

almost identical, like those of well-drilled supers on the stage. Let us admit that this device expresses the unanimity of their feeling; they are moved as one man, with a single patriotism, and, as we may judge from the hand of one encircling another's waist, by a single bond of brotherly affection. Yet still there is more than a suspicion of staginess in their pose. Perhaps David had seen Corneille's tragedy of the Horatii, written one hundred and forty-five years before; at any rate, its representation became very popular in Paris after the appearance of this picture, influenced by which the great actor. Talma, played the part, no longer in a periwig and court-clothes, but in the Roman costume. Again observe the secondary group of women. Do we feel convinced that the elder daughter betrays real grief, or her sister genuine sympathy, or that the mother's act of enfolding the little children in her arms is more than a bit of maternal conventionalism? In a word, are we really stirred by all this representation of pathos and heroism?

Now let us study, from the point of view of subject, the *Dante and Virgil*. The incident depicted may be read in Dante's "Inferno," Canto III, though the details are not closely followed in the picture. The poet of Florence, escorted by him of Mantua, has reached the shores of Acheron, that lake encircling the city of Dis (Pluto), against which leap up the fiery waves of Phlegethon. Upon the shore linger the souls of those who lived in life without praise or blame, moaning to be taken across the water, even if it be to hell. But Charon drives them back with cruel words and blows of his oar, as he takes the shade of Virgil and the living man into his crazy boat. To its gunwale cling the unhappy shades, one convulsively gripping it with his teeth; another has lost hold and sinks into the water, in which two more flounder, clutching each other as the living will when drowning. Above these writhing forms stands Dante, aghast with horror, leaning toward the Mantuan, who alone is calm, serenely fixed amid the tumult, eternally poised and youthful.

In this picture Delacroix has attempted to seize and convey by an immediate representation all the anguish and the tumult that the poet's song renders by separate stages. It was the work of a youth of twenty-three, already a master. David, a veteran of seventy-four years, when he saw it, exclaimed, "Where does it come from? I do not

recognize the style."

For it does not depend upon line as David's picture, but upon colored masses. It is true that the figures in the water are arranged so as to produce a certain wild rhythm of movement, like agitated waves; but none of the figures are inclosed in hard lines, the contours having neither the assertion nor the precision of David's. To repeat, it is an arrangement of colored masses: of dark greenish-blue sea, the pallid ivories of flesh tints, Virgil's drabbish-green robe, and Dante's drab one; his crimson *becchetto*, and the echo of its color in the fainter distant glow of fire — a turbid harmony of color, wherein the nude bodies appear as a *motif* of pain and the crimson is a crash of wrath. It is the work of a man who feels in color, as a musician does in sounds, and who plays upon the chromatics of color, somewhat as the musician upon the chromatics of sound. It is the work, not of one who uses color merely to increase the reality of appearances, as the majority of painters do, but of one of that smaller band, headed by the Venetians and Rubens, who make the color itself a source of emotional appeal. Delacroix was a colorist; and David, drilled in the Academic school which says line and form are the chief essentials, seeing the picture, asked, "Where does it come from?"

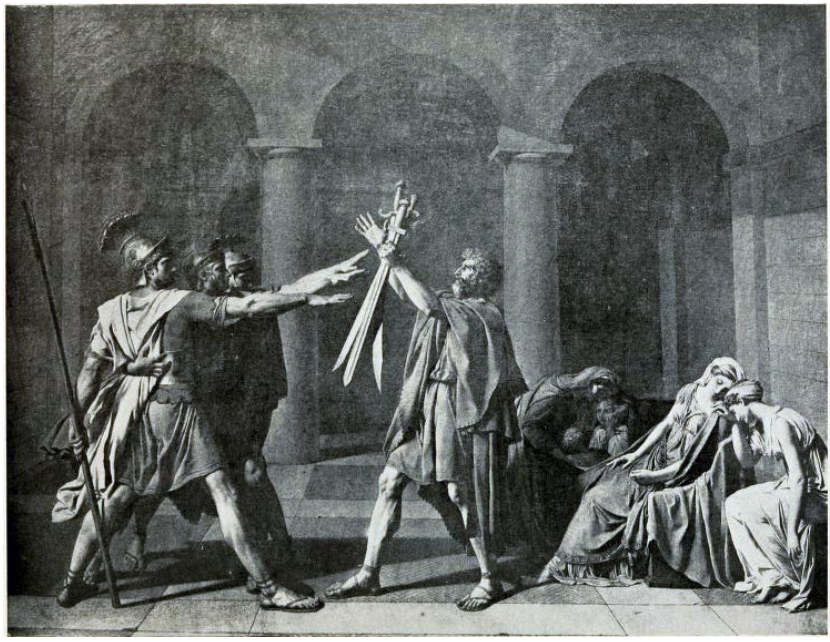
It came, in the first place, out of the imagination of a colorist, who conceives his pictures in color; sees them, I mean, in his mind's eye, as a composition of color, before he begins to resolve the whole into its parts, and work out the separate details of form. Indirectly it came out of the heart of the Romantic movement which had spread over Europe. Delacroix was inspired by the influence of Goethe, Scott, Byron, Victor Hugo, and the other poets and writers who had broken away from the coldly intellectual viewpoint of the eighteenth century, and its study of manners, to explore the passions of the human soul, and the variegated colorful life of the emotions.

David was a part, Delacroix a product, of the French Revolution, which opened a new chapter in the history of the world and also in that of painting. It had begun in protest against an extravagant and wanton court and an impotent monarch; had passed through a period of madness and horror, and culminated in an extraordinary outburst of national enthusiasm and individual energy. France, as a nation, was reborn, and — which had more influence upon the world at large

— out of this Revolution, and the American one which preceded it, was born anew the idea of individualism. David represented the protest, and had no small share in promoting it; Delacroix, the fervor of personal feelings, let loose by individualism.

It was in 1784, in Rome, after he had completed his studies at the French Academy, that David produced the picture of *Brutus* and this *Oath of the Horatii.* In them he went back to the original Roman models upon which the Classic style of Poussin, then the model of the Academic school, had been founded. Here are the semicircular arches and the vaulting, which were the most characteristic developments of Roman architecture, and columns such as the artist may have copied from the Baths of Marcellus. And against this background the figures are set as if carved in low relief, like those on the column of Trajan, of which David was so fond. By comparison with Italian painting and with that of France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this picture of the Horatii was severely simple. Then, too, what a simple severity of lofty patriotism it represented!

Its success in France was immediate. The people, tired of the voluptuous insipidities of Boucher and the others, welcomed its severity; while the principles of freedom and love of country that it inculcated gave at once a definite voice to the floating theories of the time. Republicanism, the old Roman brand of it, simple, unselfish, frugal, began to be considered the panacea for all the ills from which the French branch of the Latin race was suffering. David proved to be the strong man, fitted to the hour, and his influence, first asserted in this picture, played a big part in the subsequent Revolution. When the latter commenced he was forty years old. He was elected a deputy in the Convention, and appointed Minister of Fine Arts. In this capacity he was a despotic dictator; imposing his Roman taste even upon the costumes of the deputies and ministers, and from these upon the people, and organizing public fetes in the manner of Republican Rome. "He applied art to the heroism of the day, gave it the martial attitude of patriotism, and inspired it with the spirit of Robespierre, Saint Just, Marat, and Danton. Robespierre is said to have spoken from the tribune slowly, rhythmically, artistically. Under the same starched methodical precision David concentrated the volcanic force of his appeal to patriotism." In the first consciousness





Top: Oath of the Horatii, Jacques Louis David
Bottom: Dante and Virgil, Eugene Delacroix

of individualism, everybody was strutting and posturing self-consciously, like actors upon a stage. The times were artificial and theatrical.

And how greatly this man was penetrated by the spirit of his age is illustrated in his manner of presenting to the Convention his portrait of Marat. The people asked for their murdered man back again, longing to look once more on the features of their truest friend. "They cried to me: 'David, take up your brush, avenge Marat, so that the enemy may blanch when they perceive the distorted countenance of the man who became the victim of his love for freedom.' I heard the voice of the people, and obeyed."[20]

His portraits, however, are free from this sort of rhodomontade, intensely direct and real. "In them, he is neither rhetorical nor cold, but full of fire and the freshness of youth. Before any face to be modeled, he forgot the Greeks and Romans, saw life alone, was rejuvenated in the youth-giving fount of nature, and painted — almost alone of the painters of his generation — the truth.

"David was one of the first of the men of the Revolution to come beneath the spell of the Little Corporal. One day while he was working at his studio at the Louvre, a pupil rushed in breathlessly: 'General Buonaparte is outside the door.' Napoleon entered in a dark blue coat 'that made his lean yellow face look leaner and yellower than ever.' David dismissed his pupils, and drew in a sitting of barely two hours the stern head of the Corsican. Thus he passed into the service of Napoleon."

He was appointed Imperial Court Painter, and executed that colossal picture which has handed down to posterity a true presentation of the ceremonial pageant that took place in Notre Dame on December 2, 1804. The moment selected is that in which Napoleon, already crowned, is placing the crown upon the head of the empress. The *Coronation* was the great work of his imperial, as the *Marat* had been of his revolutionary period. He had been so intimately identified with both that, after Napoleon's final fall in 1815 and the succession of Louis XVIII, he was banished and sought refuge in Brussels, where he died in 1825. He left behind a legacy of so-called "classicalism,"

[20] Richard Muther: History of Modern Painting.

carrying on that of Poussin, which under various modifications has been preserved by the official Academy, as the basis of instruction in and the proper aim of painting. These academic principles, however, no longer confine the student to an imitation of Roman subjects and models. But, even as David permitted himself to be a naturalist in his portraits and in other subjects, such as the *Death of Marat* and the *Coronation*, so the Academy encourages still the study of nature, but within certain limitations.

It lays especial stress upon what it calls the ideal line, and ideal beauty of form and composition. Nature must be corrected to conform with the ideal representations handed down to us from Greek and Roman sculpture, and the paintings upon Greek vases. As Delacroix, mocking at these principles, said: "In order to present an ideal head of a negro, our teachers make him resemble as far as possible the profile of Antinous, and then say, 'We have done our utmost; if, nevertheless, we fail to make the negro beautiful, then we ought not to introduce into our pictures such a freak of nature, the squat nose and thick lips, which are so unendurable to the eyes.'"

This extreme view, which would exclude any subject that is not capable of being idealized, is no longer maintained by the Academy. Yet it still insists upon the prime importance of the line; and, as a result, the figures in academic pictures are usually in graceful poses and inclosed by sharp outlines. A comparison of the *Horatii* with Delacroix's *Dante and Virgil* will show the distinction very clearly. But, as a matter of fact, in nature the forms of objects are not sharply outlined. Even when a dark tree cuts against a light sky, the atmosphere that intervenes between it and our eyes tends to blur its edges. Now these effects of light and atmosphere depend not so much upon the way the picture is drawn as upon the way it is painted, and this again is connected with problems of color.

Accordingly, the Academician, precise about form, disregards problems of light and atmosphere and color; while the colorist, who cares most for these qualities, and sees nature as an arrangement of colored forms in harmonious relation, very often disregards the beauty of form, and, because of what he aims at, cannot make the lines of his objects so precise and ideally perfect. On the other hand, it is the little irregularities and indistinctness of line that give

character to forms and suggest that they have the capacity of movement and are alive. The academic figure, notwithstanding its beauty, is by comparison inert and rigid. You may realize this point by a reference to these two pictures we are studying. The figures of the men in the *Horatii* have come to gestures and positions of energy, and hold them as if cast in bronze. The women have been placed in pretty attitudes of amiable sentiment, and remain as if modeled in wax. But in the *Dante and Virgil* there are life and movement: terrific action, put forth and sustained in the figures of Charon and of the two men who grip the gunwale; action of another kind in the Dante, as he gazes with horror and balances himself in the rolling boat; even the latter moves, and the shades, although exhausted to impotence, are moving.

This picture of Delacroix's has been called "in a pictorial sense the first characteristic picture of the century." That is to say, while the art of David and his followers was virtually a translation of sculpture into painting, Delacroix's once more asserted the independence of painting, and its possession of certain qualities and possibilities which no other art possesses in the same degree. For, in the place of the tinted forms of the Academicians, Delacroix had introduced the wonder of color, used for purposes of expression by such masters as the Venetians and Rubens.

Delacroix, in fact, was one of the greatest colorists of the nineteenth century, using the word in the sense of one who thinks and feels and expresses himself by means of color. He nurtured himself upon the works of the colorists in the Louvre, especially upon Rubens. Every morning before his work began, it is said, he drew an arm, a hand, or a piece of drapery after Rubens. It was from Rubens also, and Titian, that Watteau, the great poet-painter of the eighteenth century, had drawn inspiration. And Delacroix, like him, was proud, self-reliant, delicate from his youth up, and for many years sick in soul and body. But, whereas Watteau drew from the licentiousness of the Regent's court the food for his dreams of poetry, Delacroix into his closed studio admitted the mighty impulses which had been let loose by the Revolution.

Liberty had given larger bounds to individualism, and the first of the arts to reflect this was literature. The measured prose,

conventionally correct verse, and somewhat pedantic rhetoric of the eighteenth century had been succeeded by an outburst of the imaginative faculty. The movement began in Germany with Goethe; in England with Wordsworth and Scott, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats; and in France with Victor Hugo. During a visit to London, in 1825, Delacroix saw the opera of Goethe's "Faust" performed in English, while he had already discovered Shakspeare, Byron, and Scott to be his favorites. His own romantic nature flamed up by contact with theirs; he was possessed with their souls and became the first of the Romantic painters. He took many of his subjects from the poets of his preference, not to translate into literal illustrations, but to make them express in his own language of painting the most agitated emotions of the human heart.

But the representation of agitated emotions necessitated the introduction of a good deal that was horrible to those who swore by the ideal line and perfect balance of composition. "How can ugliness," they cried, "be beautiful?" Victor Hugo produced his play of "Hernani" in 1829; and around him and Delacroix was waged the battle between the Classicists and the Romanticists. Poussin's phrase was repeated by the Classicists — "Painting is nothing more than drawing." "Had God intended to pkice color at the same height as form," wrote Charles Blanc, "he would not have failed to clothe his masterpiece man with all the hues of the humming-bird." And this "critic" called Delacroix "the tattooed savage who paints with a drunken broom."

To these and similar denunciations, continued for many years, Delacroix himself in one of his writings has contributed a reply. It pleads for a wider conception of the idea of beauty. Winckelmann, the great German archeologist of the eighteenth century, had asserted, "The sole means for art to become, aye, if possible, inimitably great, is the imitation of the ancients." "The marble manner only requires a little animating." "The highest beauty is that which is proper neither to this nor to that person" — that is to say, *not individual*. This was practically the doctrine of the Classicists. To it Lessing, another German, replied that truth to nature was the first condition of beauty; and Goethe expanded it by saying that everything natural was true as far as it was beautiful. The English Keats

chimed in, "Truth is beauty, beauty is truth." Delacroix's words are: "This famous thing, the Beautiful, must be — every one says so — the final aim of art. But if it be the only aim, what are we to make of men like Rubens, Rembrandt, and, in general, all the artistic natures of the North, who preferred other qualities belonging to their art? … There is no recipe by which one can attain to what is ideally beautiful. Style depends absolutely and solely upon the free and original expression of each master's peculiar qualities" — *upon individuality*, in fact.

There are, among others, some important considerations in these views of the Romanticists, which may be put in the following familiar way. It is quite possible for an exceedingly pretty girl to be very stupid; there is also such a thing as the beauty of character; we enjoy the beauty of the slimness of the silver birch, and the rugged stanchness of an oak; there is a charm about a Gloucester fisherman as well as an *Apollo Belvedere*. On the whole, we do well to be interested in people for what they are rather than for what they might be; individual character is always worth studying; when it is exhibited under the stress of powerful emotion, it is conspicuously so. The artist himself may be a man of marked individuality of character; it is better for the world that he should express himself freely, instead of within the tight groove of some conventional method.

The Classicists were intrenched in the official fortress of the Academy, and for long years resisted the attempts of Delacroix to obtain entrance. Indeed, it was not until twenty-two years after his death, when a great collection of his works was exhibited, that France realized how grand an artist it had lost. Before he died, other men with other motives, as we shall see, rose up to challenge the official standard of excellence; for the history of painting in the nineteenth century, centering in Paris, has been one of continually new assertions of individualism. Our sympathies, quite possibly, will be with the rebels, but that should not blind us to the value of the academic principles of painting.

If there is to be an official and permanent standard, the Classic is the best for the purpose. The standard to be serviceable must be one that can be reduced to a reasonable certainty. In painting, composition and line are the elements which can most readily be

formulated; and, when founded upon the canons of antique art, are established upon a basis that the continuing judgment of the world has approved. Given this central body, there is the perpetual inducement for independent spirits to fly off at a tangent from it, which is productive of vitality. The classical ideal provides at once firm groundwork for the average student and a starting-point for independent genius. Permanence and progress are alike insured.

CHAPTER 21

Theodore Rousseau / Jean Baptiste Camille Corot

1812 – 1867	1796 – 1875
Fontainebleau-Barbizon School of France	Fontainebleau-Barbizon School of France

Three miles from the landscape-forest which adjoins the Palace of Fontainebleau lies the little village of Barbizon. After 1832 it became the headquarters of a group of painters whose school and studio were the forest. They were the second protest of the nineteenth century against the formalism of academical teaching, and, though the artists varied individually, they were all united in their first-hand study of nature, so that they are distinguished as the Fontainebleau-Barbizon School.

Once before there had been a Fontainebleau School, the term being applied to that group of Italian artists — among them Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, and Cellini — whom Francis I invited to decorate his palace. With these men the subject had been the human figure, used with the artificial intention that decoration permits; whereas the group that appeared three hundred years later was concerned with nature, represented naturally. It comprised Rousseau, the acknowledged leader, Jules Dupre, Corot, Diaz, and Daubigny; the sheep and cattle painters, Troyon, Van Marcke, and Jacque; and Millet, the painter of the peasant. This new group was related to the Dutch School of landscape-painters of the seventeenth century, through the English Constable.

The latter, learning of the Dutchmen, had revived the natural study of landscape and carried it further than they, introducing into his pictures the greens of nature, truer effects of air and light, and the suggestion of movement in the foliage. During the years from 1822 to 1827 Constable's pictures had been appearing at the Salon, and had been awarded a gold medal. Delacroix, the colorist, was attracted by them; and other painters, tired of the frigid unreality of the classic

school, welcomed these nature-studies, and through them were induced to study also the works of the old Dutch landscapists in the Louvre. Among the many, thus influenced, was Rousseau, who had worked in the studio of the classicist Lethiere, but, dissatisfied with the latter's grandiloquent canvases, had taken to wandering about the plain of Montmartre with his paint-box, and in 1826 had produced his first little picture.

But another influence played its part in shaping the future of the new school. Romanticism was in the air; Delacroix and others were making their pictures the medium of emotional expression. Accordingly, by the time that the Barbizon men had found themselves, their art was distinguished not only by truth to nature but also by poetic feeling. Of the two whom we are considering, we may say that Rousseau was the epic poet of the group; Corot, the lyric.

Of this lyric quality in Corot's work we may be conscious if we turn to *Dance of the Nymphs*. It yields a suggestion of music and of songfulness; exactly how, it may be hard to explain; but, perhaps, the reason is that there was constant music in the heart of the man who painted it. He sang as he worked, played the violin at intervals, and regularly attended the opera. Comparing himself with Rousseau, he once said, "Rousseau is an eagle. As for me, I am only a lark, putting forth some little songs in my gray clouds."

On the other hand, the epic quality in Rousseau's picture may not be so immediately recognizable; we shall better appreciate it when we have examined the motives of his work more closely. Comparing the example here reproduced with the one by Corot, we note this great difference, that Rousseau's shows a solidity of form and a power of clear decision in the lines inclosing the forms, whereas Corot's masses are by comparison dreamy and unsubstantial, the outlines blurred. Rousseau insists upon the form of objects and the character of their forms, while Corot escapes as far as possible from the actual things and renders the effect which they produce upon the senses. He sought to represent the essences of things; the fragrance, as it were, rather than the flower.

Both these men were city-bred. So, indeed, have been most of the great landscape-painters; a fact which may seem strange, until we remember how apt we all are to long for that which is farthest away

from our actual life. Corot's parents were court dressmakers in the days of the first Napoleon, in comfortable circumstances, so that their son never wanted for money. Rousseau's father was a tailor, living up four flights of stairs; and Rousseau himself was well on in manhood before he ceased to know the bite of poverty. Corot received the usual classic training and then went to Italy; but it was not until he had paid three visits to that country, and had reached the age of forty-six, that he came under the influence of Rousseau and the course of his art was changed. Even then some ten years elapsed before he perfected that style upon which his fame chiefly rests. Rousseau, on the other hand, found his true bent early.

The critic, Burger-Thoré, writing in 1844, asks a question of Rousseau. "Do you remember," he says, "the years when we sat on the window-ledges of our attics in the Rue de Taitbout and let our feet dangle at the edge of the roof, looking out over the chaos of houses and chimneys, which you, with a twinkle in your eye, would compare to mountains, trees, and outlines of the earth? You were not able to go to the Alps, into the cheerful country, and so you created picturesque landscapes for yourself out of those horrible skeletons of walls. Do you still recall the little tree in Rothschild's garden which we caught sight of between two roofs? It was the one green thing that we could see; every fresh shoot of the little poplar wakened our interest in spring, and in autumn we counted the falling leaves." "From this mood," as Muther says, "sprang modern landscape-painting, with its delicate reserve of subject, and its vigorously heightened love of nature."

Notwithstanding this nature-love in his heart, the young Rousseau at first devoted himself to mathematics, aiming to become a student at the Polytechnic Institution. The fact is interesting as showing that he combined the instincts of an artist and a scientist, a point we shall return to later. Meanwhile, as we have seen, he entered Lethiere's studio, and watched him paint such subjects as *The Death of Brutus* and *The Death of Virginia.* But there was nothing in them to satisfy the youth's love of nature, and he began his wanderings with his paint-box in the country round Paris. The year 1833 found him for the first time in the forest of Fontainebleau, and the following year, at the age of twenty-two, he painted his first masterpiece. *Cotes*

de Grandville. It was accepted at the Salon, and awarded a medal of the third class.

No further concession, however, could be allowed to a young man so dangerously independent from the academical standpoint, and for thirteen years, indeed until after the Revolution of 1848 and the fall of the "Bourgeois King," Louis Phillippe, his pictures were excluded from the official exhibitions. Even then, officialdom, although it could not ignore this leader of a new movement, slighted him by singling out his followers, Dupre, Diaz, Troyon, for the Legion of Honor in preference to himself. It is true they were older men, but what Diaz thought of the slight to Rousseau may be gathered from the words in which he responded to the courtesies tendered him at the official banquet. Rising on his wooden leg, he gave the toast, "Here's to our master who has been forgotten." In the following year, 1852, Rousseau himself was admitted to the Legion. At the Universal Exposition of 1855, the world discovered how great an artist he was; but by this time other shadows were beginning to creep over his life.

He had married a poor, unfortunate creature, a mere child of the forest, the only feminine being he had found time to love during his toilsome life. After a few years of marriage she was seized with madness; and, while he tended her, Rousseau himself became the victim of an affection of the brain, which darkened his last years. The end came in 1867, the year of another Universal Exposition. He had served as one of the heads of departments on the jury, and in the natural routine should have been awarded the higher rank of officer in the Legion of Honor; instead of which it was given to a man twelve years his junior, Gerome. It was the climax to the tragedy of his life, and he survived it only a few weeks. In the churchyard of Chailly, near Barbizon, his body rests beneath a stone erected by Millet — a simple cross upon an unhewn block of sandstone, which bears a brass tablet with the inscription, "Theodore Rousseau, Peintre."

What a contrast the happy peace of Corot's life presents! His father had apprenticed him to a linen-draper, but after eight years consented to his becoming a painter. "You will have a yearly allowance of twelve hundred francs," he said, "and if you can live on that you may do as you please." Twenty-three years later, when the son was elected to the Legion of Honor, this allowance was doubled,

"for," as the father remarked, "Camille seems to have some talent after all."

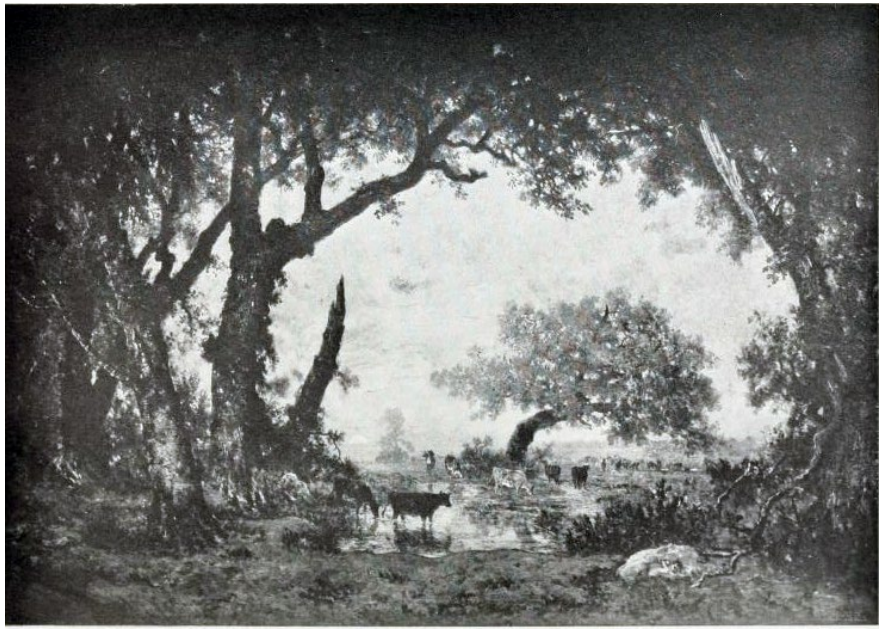
We have already alluded to his beginnings as a painter, how he went through the usual course of study of the figure and attempts at classical landscapes after the manner of Poussin. When he paid his first visit to Italy, he was so attracted by the moving life on the streets of Rome and Naples that he longed to transfer it to his sketch-book. But the figures would not remain still long enough to be treated methodically, as he had learned to draw; so he set himself to try and obtain with a few strokes the general effect of the moving picture, and with such success that after a time he could rapidly suggest the appearance of even so intricate a scene as a ballet. This skill was to stand him in good stead, when he should seek to represent the tremble of foliage in the morning or evening air. It taught him also, by degrees, the value of generalization; of not representing details so much as of discovering the salient qualities of objects, and of uniting them into a whole that will suggest rather than definitely describe.

But all this time the inspiration of his work was Italy and the Italian landscape; it was not until he had returned from his third visit thither, and was forty-six, that the landscape of France began to appeal to his imagination. He became acquainted at last with Rousseau, and with the aim of the Barbizon artists to represent nature as surrounded by air and light, and he set to work to learn the method of painting these qualities, reaching finally a style that is peculiar to himself.

It is so closely a result of his personal attitude toward nature, particularly toward the dawn and evening, which were his favorite moments, that a letter to Jules Dupre, in which he describes his sensations at these moments, gives one an understanding of his style.

> One gets up early, at three in the morning, before the sun; one goes and sits at the foot of a tree; one watches and waits. One sees nothing much at first. Nature resembles a whitish canvas on which are sketched scarcely the profiles of some masses; everything is perfumed, and shines in the fresh breath of dawn. Bing! The sun grows bright, but has not yet torn asunder the veil behind which lie concealed





Top: Dance of the Nymphs, Corot
Bottom: Edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau, Rousseau

> the meadows, the dale, and hills of the horizon. The vapors of night still creep, like silvery flakes, over the numbed-green vegetation. Bing! Bing! — a first ray of sunlight — a second ray of sunlight — the little flowers seem to wake up joyously. They all have their drop of dew which trembles — the chilly leaves are stirred with the breath of morning — in the foliage the birds sing unseen — all the flowers seem to be saying their prayers. Loves on butterfly wings frolic over the meadow and make the tall plants wave — one sees nothing — yet everything is there — the landscape is entirely behind the veil of mist, which mounts, mounts, sucked up by the sun; and, as it rises, reveals the river, plated with silver, the meadows, trees, cottages, the receding distance — one distinguishes at last everything that one had divined at first.

How spontaneous a commentary upon his pictures of early morning — nature in masses, fresh and fragrant, the "numbed-green" of the vegetation, the shiver of leaves, and the twinkling of flowers, the river plated with silver, and the sky suffused with misty light!

In the same letter he describes the evening:

> Nature drowses — the fresh air, however, sighs among the leaves — the dew decks the velvety grass with pearls. The nymphs fly — hide themselves — and desire to be seen. Bing? — a star in the sky which pricks its image on the pool. Charming star, whose brilliance is increased by the quivering of the water, thou watchest me — thou smilest to me with half-closed eye! Bing! — a second star appears in the water, a second eye opens. Be the harbingers of welcome, fresh and charming stars. Bing! Bing! Bing! — three, six, twenty stars. All the stars in the sky are keeping tryst in this happy pool. Everything darkens, the pool alone sparkles. There is a swarm of stars — all yields to illusion. The sun being gone to bed, the inner sun of the soul, the sun of art, awakes. Bon! there is my picture done!

This expresses the dreaming of a poet, and during the last twenty-

five years of his life, when his best work was done, it was in this way that he worked. Years ago his father had given him a little house in Ville d'Avray, near Paris, and thither during the summer the old bachelor repaired with his sister. The time was spent in filling his soul with visions of nature, which, when he returned to Paris, were transferred to canvas. This picture that we are studying was painted in 1851, before Corot had reached his final style. It still shows some traces of classic feeling, particularly in the introduction of figures; but also a taste of what was to follow in the soft blur of foliage that tips the slender stems in the center. Later on he generalized even more freely; his trees become masses of softly blurred leafage, silhouetted tenderly against the delicate vibration of the sky, trembling indistinctly as in a dream-picture, while here and there, like the introduction of the word "Bing" in his letter, are little accents of leaves or bits of tree-trunk, vibrating sharply like the twang of a violin string.

Rousseau's advice, on the contrary, to his pupils was, "Form is the first thing to observe." The point to be noted is that, whereas Corot had begun by observing form and had then escaped as far as possible from it, Rousseau, first and always, based his art upon it. Indeed, at the middle period of his life the scientific instinct asserted itself, and for a while he sank the larger feeling for the whole in too exact a representation of detail. But, during his great periods, he exhibited a mastery in the delineation of the impressiveness of form that has never been surpassed. His favorite tree was the oak, with sturdy arms supporting its weight of leaves and branches, and strong roots, in between the rocks, grasping the firm earth. The strength of nature, her deep embedded force, putting itself forth in stout and lusty growth, continuously vigorous; the mighty force of clouds that replenish the earth; the vastness and grandeur of the sky in the full glory of midday, or the superb pageant of the sunset, as in this picture; in a word, the perennial strength of nature, as contrasted with the little lives of men — such was the theme upon which he spent his life. While Corot drank in nature, nature to Rousseau was entirely outside himself. He was in love with her for her own sake.

This was a grander attitude toward nature than that of Corot. The latter, in modern phraseology, was a temperamental artist; that is to say, he chose from nature what suited his moods and painted her

with a certain invariableness of manner, as if there were nothing in nature except what he felt about her. All that he did was lovely, but it was limited in scope; whereas Rousseau, with his broad impersonal vision searching nature for what she had to tell him, painted in every picture a different subject. It was the phases of her inexhaustible story, a story as old as mankind and that will outlive the last of humanity, that he treated; and it is for this reason, because he suggested the continuity of her elemental forces, even while depicting a certain phase, that one may rightly describe him as the epic poet of the Barbizon School.

The truth of this would be more evident if we had the opportunity of seeing a number of Rousseau's pictures alongside of a number of Corot's; but even from the comparison of these two examples I think it may be gathered. The *Dance of the Nymphs* is a morning poem; breathing the freshness of a world that, despite of time, is forever innocent and young. The creatures that enliven it, nymphs and satyrs, are the effervescence of fancy, removed very far from the responsibilities and daily experiences of life. The figures which Corot introduces in his landscapes are always embodiments of the spirit of the scene, like the Dryads, Naiads, and Oreads of the old Greek imagining. But in Rousseau's Sunset Scene another day of labor is finished; rest is brooding down upon the tired earth; creatures nearer to nature than beings in the shape of humanity are taking their fill of water before they too settle down upon the earth, that mighty bosom from which all things draw nourishment and on which all rest. Those same cows — or others like them — will inhabit the same scene to-morrow; those sturdy trees and branches will survive another and another day, as they have weathered many; that boulder will defy the effort of time to remove it. The scene, as Rousseau painted it, is typical and elemental; not alone a spot on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau, but a poem of universal import, whose theme is the ever-present one of earth's enduring strength, and of recurring toil and rest. Rousseau reached this power of elemental expression by continually concentrating his great faculty of observation upon the fundamental qualities of nature, which as compared with man's moods and changes are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Corot, on the contrary, nourishing his moods on nature, ended by

interpreting these moods of his own rather than nature herself. He is not the great descriptive, epic poet, alive to the mighty forces that underlie the vastness of his subject, but the sweet, lyric singer of a few choice moments. As he said himself: he is the lark; Rousseau, the eagle.

For Corot recognized Rousseau's superiority not only in wider sweep of vision but in his mastery over form; and form is the foundation of all great painting, whether of the human figure or landscape. It is with the close study of forms of nature that all great landscape-painters have begun, even if, like Corot, they subsequently try to merge the form in the expression of the sentiments which the objects of the landscape arouse. For the painter cannot represent spirit to the mind, except by representing to the eye a real suggestion of the form in which it is embodied. This is the lesson of all the landscape-painting which has followed upon the new movement of the Fontainebleau-Barbizon artists.

Landscape to-day is the most living branch of painting; nowhere more so than in our own country. American painters have continued the nature-study and poetic feeling of the Barbizon men, and often have gone farther than they in the rendering of light and air and of the manifold variety of nature's coloring. But whenever we come upon men of commanding talent, such as George Inness, Alexander Wyant, and Homer Martin among those who are dead, and such as Tryon, Murphy, Horatio Walker, Winslow Homer, and very many others among the living, we shall find that while often they prefer to subordinate form to poetical impression, it is with the precise and patient study of form that they first began. Upon this firm foundation they have subsequently erected the spiritualized fabrics of their poetic fancies. They have not builded castles in the air, but delicate structures planted firmly upon the facts of earth. Hence the hold they take upon the perceptive faculty; for they reach us first through our experience, and then delight our imagination.

CHAPTER 22
Jules Breton / Jean François Millet

1814 – 1875 — Fountainebleau-Barbizon

1827 – 1875 — French School / School of France

Here are two pictures of peasant subjects, and, as it happens, with similar titles: Jules Breton's *The Gleaner*, and *The Gleaners* by Jean François Millet.

With what a proud carriage Breton's girl strides through the field! How painfully Millet's women are stooping! Their figures are clumsy, uncouthly clad, and you cannot see their faces. This girl, however, is dressed in a manner that sets off her strong and supple form; her face is handsome and its expression haughtily independent. As the meek women stoop, each carries one of her hands behind her back. If you imitate for yourself the action of leaning down and extending one hand, you will find that the other has an involuntary tendency to go back in order to maintain the balance. This natural tendency of the human body to secure its balance by opposing direction of its parts is a principle that the best artists rely upon to produce a perfect poise of rest or movement in their figures.

Now study the arms in Breton's picture. The left one — with what a gesture of elegant decision it is placed upon the hip! — while the right has the elbow thrown out with an action of freedom and energy. Evidently the girl is not tired, or the elbow would seek support against the chest. Her hands, too, are finely shaped, and the fingers spread themselves rather daintily. I wonder if so light a grasp as that of the right hand on a few ears of wheat would really hold the sheaf in place upon her shoulder. I wonder, also, how her bare, shapely feet withstood the pricks of the stubble. I notice that Millet's women have prudently kept on their clumsy wooden sabots.

But now turn the inquiry toward your own experience. If you went into a wheat-field where peasants were gleaning, would you

expect to see a beautiful, proud girl like Breton's, unfatigued by her toil, or homely women like Millet's? I fancy you would be more likely to meet the latter, and I doubt if anywhere in France you might come across such a type as Breton's, which is rather that of the women of the Roman Campagna, a noble remnant of the classic times. She is unquestionably a beautiful creature.

But beauty does not consist only in what is pleasing to the eye; there is a beauty also which appeals to the mind. "Truth is beauty, beauty is truth." Perhaps if we study Millet's picture we shall find that it has a beauty of its own in its truth to nature. His women are not posing for their picture. Quite unconscious of anybody's gaze, they are absorbed in their toil, doing what they are supposed to be doing in the simplest and most natural way. They are very poor, these peasants; working early and late, and despite all their labor keeping body and soul together with difficulty; a meek, God-fearing race, roughened and drawn out of shape by toil.

With what an intimate insight into the lives of these people as well as into their occupation Millet represents them! He paints them, not as if he were a city gentleman visiting the country, but as if he belonged to their own class. And, as a fact, he did. He was the son of a small farmer, and had bent his own back under the scorching sun and felt the smell of the earth in his nostrils. But an uncle, who was a priest, had taught him as a boy, so that in his manhood he read Shakspeare and Virgil in the original texts. Therefore, although he was of the peasant life, he was greater than it, and brought to the interpretation of its most intimate facts a largeness of view and depth of sympathy which make his pictures much more than studies of peasants. They are types. He painted a picture of a sower that is now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York; and when we have once grasped the fullness of its sufficiency, it becomes to us the type of *The Sower*; so that we could not look on another picture of similar subject without instinctively comparing it in our mind with Millet's.

Breton, on the other hand, had never toiled in the fields; he pursued the usual routine of study through the art schools, whereas Millet, "wild man of the woods," as the other students called him, tried them only to abandon them. He could not master, or bring himself to care about, the elegancies and refinements of drawing as

practised in the schools. In these Breton is proficient; he has also written very creditable poetry, so that, when he went into the fields for subjects, he had the teaching of the schools in mind and the sentiment of a poet in his heart. Accordingly he freely translated the peasant into both.

Note, then, these two ways of reaching a poetical result: Breton had beautiful ideas and used the peasant as a peg on which to hang them; Millet, with no direct thought of being poetical, sought only to portray the truth as he saw and felt it. But he has represented the dull, homely facts with such an insight into the relation which they bear to the lives of the people engaged in them, that he has created — and this is the great accomplishment of the poet — an atmosphere of imagination around the facts.

Which of these two methods of poetic creativeness is, per se, the better — whether the starting-point shall be from the imagination, which uses the facts merely as a string to thread its beads upon, or from the facts themselves as the groundwork or justification of the web of imagination woven over them — is not to be determined here or, probably, anywhere. It is better worth while to regard these two methods as periodically asserting themselves. Thus in the splendid days of the Italian Renaissance the Breton point of view was the one in vogue. In our own era, however, that of Millet has prevailed both in literature and painting. The present is an age of naturalism, and one of the master-minds which helped to make it so was Millet.

His early life was very close to nature. His father's farm was at Gruchy, in the hilly department of Manche, which juts out like a promontory into the English Channel. In that narrow strip the sea is nowhere far off.

He grew up with the air of the hills and of the sea in his nostrils, both conducive to sturdiness of character and to the development of imagination, if a boy chances to have any. And the young Millet had. He knew nothing of art or artists, but he had the desire to represent what he saw, and in the interims of work upon the poor farm he would copy the engravings in the family Bible, or take a piece of charcoal and draw upon a white wall. By the time he was eighteen, a family council was held, and it was decided that the father should take him into Cherbourg and consult a local painter as to Jean's prospects. The

painter advised his studying art, and undertook to teach him. However, he worked in Cherbourg only two months, for then his father died and he had to return home to resume his work as a farm laborer. Five more years he labored, until the municipality of Cherbourg provided a subsidy to enable him to go to Paris to study. He was now twenty-three, a broad-chested Hercules, awkward and shy, his big head covered with long fair hair; with nothing to denote intellectual force except a pair of piercing dark-blue eyes. Delaroche, to whose studio he attached himself, was kind to him, but he himself could not understand the large classical pictures that the master painted. To him they seemed artificial, with no real sentiment. Ringing in his ears, even then, as he used to say in later life, was the "cry of the soil"; memories of his home life, that in some way he wanted to learn to paint. Delaroche's studio was no place for him, and after a little while he left it.

Then followed eight years of beating the air. He married, and had to bestir himself for a living. He tried to paint what the people seemed to like — pretty little figure subjects; but prettiness was not in his line, and the attempt to seek it disgusted him. Suddenly he made the great resolve to paint what he wished to and could paint, and, in 1848, produced *The Winnower*. It represented a clumsy peasant, in uncouth working-clothes, stooping over a sieve as he shakes it to and fro. From the academic standpoint, a shockingly vulgar picture! Yet it sold for five hundred francs ($100)! Millet now had the courage of his convictions.

His friend Jacque, afterward the celebrated painter and etcher of sheep and poultry, told him of a little place with a name ending in "-zon," near the forest of Fontainebleau, where they could live cheaply and study from nature. The two painters, with their wives and children, rumbled out of Paris in a cart, which took them to the town of Fontainebleau. Thence they proceeded on foot through the forest. It was very wild in those days. "How beautiful!" was Millet's constant exclamation. Arrived at Barbizon, they were welcomed at Ganne's Inn by Rousseau, Diaz, and the other artists who lived in the village, and invited to the evening meal. When a fresh painter came into the colony, it was the custom to take down from the wall a certain big pipe, that, as the newcomer puffed at it, the company might judge





Top: The Gleaners, Jean François Millet
Bottom: The Gleaner, Jules Breton

from the rings of smoke whether he was to be reckoned among the "classicists" or "colorists." Jacque was proclaimed a colorist, but, some uncertainty being expressed concerning Millet, the latter exclaimed, "Ah! well, if you are embarrassed, put me in a class of my own." "A good answer," cried Diaz, "and he looks strong and big enough to hold his own in it." The little pleasantly was prophetic.

But its fulfilment was deferred for many years, during which Millet worked on in poverty; pictures that now would bring large sums of money being refused at the exhibitions of the Salon and finding no purchasers. A hint of his condition is contained in a letter to his friend Sensier, acknowledging the receipt of twenty dollars: "I have received the hundred francs. They came just at the right time. Neither my wife nor I had tasted food for twenty-four hours. It is a blessing that the little ones, at any rate, have not been in want."

It was only from about his fortieth year that his pictures began to sell at the rate of from two hundred and fifty to three hundred francs each. Rousseau, who had himself known the extremes of poverty, was the first to give him a large sum, buying the *Wood-cutter* for four thousand francs, under the pretense that it was for an American purchaser. It was resold at the Hartmann sale in 1880 for 133,000 francs. By the beginning of the sixties, however, Millet's reputation was no longer in question. At the World's Exposition of 1867 he was represented by nine pictures and received the grand medal. In the Salon of 1869 he was on the hanging committee! But he still continued what has been happily called his "life of sublime monotony"; his sojourn in Barbizon being interrupted only during the war in 1871, when he retired to Cherbourg, painting there some fine pictures of the sea. He died in 1875, at the age of sixty, and was buried in the little churchyard of Chailly, overlooking the forest. A rock in the latter bears a bronze tablet on which the sculptor has represented side by side the bust-portraits of Rousseau, the father of modern French landscape, and Millet, the artist of the people who work in the fields.

In his own words, Millet tried to depict "the fundamental side of men and things." His subject was the peasant life: not the representation of it such as one sees in opera, nor the pretty, sentimental aspect of it; but the actual drama of labor year in and year out proceeding through the four seasons; the "cry of the soil," echoing in the

hearts of the patient, plodding. God-fearing toilers. Everything was typical. We have spoken of his Sower. Of another picture the critic, Castagnary, wrote: "Do you remember his *Reaper*? He might have reaped the whole earth!"

The secret of it is twofold. Firstly, Millet conceived of his subject as if it were an Epic of Labor; he himself gave to a series of his drawings the title *The Epic of the Fields*; so that all he did was imbued with a deep seriousness and high sincerity. In one of his letters he explains what was in his mind as he painted *The Water-Carrier*,[21] which is now in the possession of Mr. George W. Vanderbilt and at present on exhibition in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

> In the woman coining from drawing water I have endeavored that she shall be neither a water-carrier nor a servant, but the woman who has just drawn water for the house, the water for her husband's and her children's soup; that she shall seem to be carrying neither more nor less than the weight of the full buckets; that, beneath the sort of grimace which is natural on account of the strain on her arms, and the blinking of her eyes caused by the light, one may see a look of rustic kindliness on her face. I have always shunned with a kind of horror everything approaching the sentimental.[22] I have desired, on the other hand, that this woman should perform simply and good-naturedly, without regarding it as irksome, an act which, like her other household duties, is one she is accustomed to perform every day of her life. Also I wanted to make people imagine the freshness of the fountain, and that its antiquated appearance should make it clear that many before her had come to draw water from it.

Secondly, in the representation of a subject, as may be gathered from his letter, he looked only for the essential, the fundamental thing in the gesture or characterization. In another letter he says: "I

[21] The original title was *Femme qui vient puiser de l'eau*.

[22] The only picture of his that can possibly be suspected of sentimentalism is *The Anglus,* the weakness of which is that the point on which it largely depends for its motive is not to be gathered from the picture, but has to be learned from the title.

have been reproached for not observing the *detail*; I see it, but I prefer to construct the *synthesis*, which as an artistic effort is higher and more robust." This gift of his can be more readily studied in his drawings and etchings, in which with a few lines he gives the whole character of a pose or gesture. He never was a facile painter, so that his greatness as an artist is perhaps more discernible in the black-and-white than in the colored subjects. Certainly in his crayon drawings, lithographs, and etchings he proved himself to be one of that limited number of artists who may be reckoned master-draftsmen. Few have displayed in an equal degree the rare gift of expressing the maximum of character with a minimum of lines. Moreover, the character that he expresses is of that grand and elemental quality which places him, despite the difference of subject-matter, in the neighborhood of Michelangelo.

Millet's influence produced a host of painters of the peasant, among whom the strongest are the Frenchman Lhermitte, and Israels the Dutchman. These, like him, have represented their subject with sympathy and with understanding also. Breton, with whom we have contrasted Millet, did not.

CHAPTER 23
Gustave Courbet / Arnold Boecklin

1819 – 1878 1827 – 1901

Realistic School of France / Modern German School

A glance at these two pictures— Boecklin's *Isle of the Dead* and Courbet's *Funeral at Ornans* — reveals at once a great contrast. In Boecklin's composition the horizontal line is subordinated to the vertical ones; these spire up or tower in bastion-like masses, lifting our imagination with them. In Courbet's, however, the almost level line of the landscape shuts down like a lid upon the parallel horizontal group of figures; the only vertical line that detaches itself is that of the crucifix; but this is too slight to overcome the impression that the composition holds our thoughts to the ground.

These differences of composition correspond to the differences of the artists' motives. Boecklin sought to produce an effect of solemn grandeur, of tranquil isolation, not unmixed with awe; of contrast between the monumental permanence of the island and the frailty and insignificance of the boat, which carries the mourner and the dead over the shifting water to the dead's long home. On the other hand, in Courbet's picture there is no grandeur either of sentiment or appearance; none of the awe that belongs to isolation nor much of the solemnity that attaches to a funeral, for even the ecclesiastical ceremoniousness is offset by the grave-digger in his shirt-sleeves and by the presence of a dog. As for the crowd, some few are mourners, but the rest, drawn thither only by curiosity, or in some cases, as we may judge from their costumes, in an official capacity; all very ordinary every-day people, going through with the business according to the usual routine. For, while Boecklin's picture is a vision of the imagination, Courbet's is a record of facts, the fact of committing a corpse to the ground, as the artist had seen it in his native town of Ornans; a record, so entirely prosaic, that very likely it repels us at first, though it may end by fascinating us for the very reason of its

uncompromising truth to reality.

Courbet, in fact, was a realist; Boecklin, a painter-poet. The two ideas, although wide apart, are not absolutely separated, for we shall see presently that the German's poetry was based upon reality and that the Frenchman's realism could yield a measure of poetry. Yet, for a while, it will be better to study the two separately.

We have noted how the classic motive, under the influence of David, marked the beginning of the nineteenth century, and was carried on by his followers, particularly by Ingres. Also that it was attacked, on the one hand by the Romanticists, under the leadership of Delacroix, and on the other by the group of artists at Barbizon who made the study of nature their motive; and that amid this group of naturalists Millet was the great naturalist painter of the peasants, representing them exactly as they appeared in the pursuit of their daily employments.

But in 1850, when Courbet painted the *Funeral at Ornans,* Millet was known only to a few beyond the limits of Barbizon; none of those Barbizon men had as yet influenced the world; Paris itself, the center of the arts, was the citadel of Classicism. If it was to be stormed, it must be by a personality more robust and with more love of giving and taking hard blows. Such a one was Courbet.

Ornans, his birthplace, is near the beautiful valley of the Doubs, close to the western boundary of Switzerland, and it was here as a boy, and later as a man, that he absorbed the love of landscape, of streams and waterfalls, overhung with rocks and trees, and of quiet pools where the deer steal down to drink; subjects that often occupied his brush. That they did so, in itself marked his difference from classic painters of his time, who cared nothing for landscape; but his main difference was of a much more positive kind.

He was by nature a revolutionary, a man born to oppose existing order and to assert his independence. Of massive build, with a sprinkling of German blood in his veins, broad-shouldered, thick-necked, with a face framed in black hair, and features that might have been modeled from an Assyrian bas-relief, he had that amount of bluster and brutality which makes the revolutionary count in art as well as in politics. And in both directions his spirit of revolt manifested itself.

He started for Paris with the purpose of studying law; but, being

arrived there, began to study art. Yet he did not attach himself to the studio of any of the prominent masters. Already in his country home he had had a little instruction in painting, and now turned for more to the masterpieces of the Louvre. Even in front of these, however, he did not play the part of a submissive student. He looked them over to see what he could gain from them, and gradually discovered a method of painting that would best serve his purpose to be independent of everybody, to see with his own eyes and to paint just what he saw. At first his pictures were not sufficiently distinctive to arouse any opposition, and were admitted to the Salon. So, too, was *The Stone-Breakers*, in which he first displayed his characteristic self. This picture, representing two laborers in uncouth costumes by the roadside, one kneeling as he breaks the stones, the other planting his figure firmly to sustain the weight of a basketful of stones which he is moving — a picture in which there is no grace of composition, but the strongly painted rendering of an actual episode in the lives of the poor — declared itself amid the classical surroundings in the Salon of 1851 as, "a rough, true, honest word, spoken amid elaborate society phrases."

Then followed the *Funeral at Ornans,* which the critics violently assailed: "These burlesque masks with their fuddled red noses, this village priest who seems to be a tippler, and the harlequin of a veteran who is putting on a hat which is too big for him"; "A masquerade funeral, six metres long, in which there is more to laugh at than to weep over"; "The most extravagant fancy could not descend to such a degree of triviality and hideousness"; "He means to sneer at the religious ceremony, since the picture has a defiant and directly brutal vulgarity. He has taken pains to expose the repulsive, ludicrous, and grotesque elements in the members of the funeral party."

It will discount the force of these so-called criticisms, to remember that The Stone-Breakers, such a subject as Millet might have chosen, was slighted because it represented mere laborers in ragged and dirty clothes, "an excessively commonplace subject" — and that Millet's pictures at that time were being rejected by a public accustomed only to the peasants of the comic-opera stage.

Indeed the real offense of Courbet's pictures was that they represented live flesh and blood; men and women as they really are, and

as really doing the business in which they are engaged — not men and women deprived of personality and idealized into a type, posed in positions that will decorate the canvas; frigid, marbleized figures like those of Ingres, or tinted and china-like, such as those of Bouguereau. Among these classical and semiclassical painters, whose art was built on formulas, this huge peasant pushed his way, elbowing them roughly, treading intentionally on their toes. They winced at the realities of life — very well, he would give them the realities as strongly, and, if need be, as disagreeably as possible. He spent his evenings at a restaurant where younger artists and the young writers of the school of Balzac congregated. "I am a democrat," he would tell them; and this too, mind you, in the days of Napoleon III. "By doing away with the ideal we shall arrive at the emancipation of the individual. I admire Velasquez, because he saw things with his own eyes, but these imitators of Raphael and Pheidias — pah! It is the greatest impudence to wish to paint things one has never seen, of the appearance of which one cannot have the slightest conception. Better paint railway stations, the views of places through which one travels, the likenesses of great men, engine houses, mines and manufactories, for these are the saints and miracles of the nineteenth century." He advocated painting things as they are, and proclaimed that *la vérité vraie* must be the aim of the artist. So at the Universal Exposition of 1855 he withdrew his pictures from the exhibition grounds and set them in a wooden booth, just outside the entrance, with a big lettering over the door, "Courbet — Realist."

Like every revolutionary, he was an extremist. He ignored the fact that to every artist the truth of nature appears under a different guise according to his way of seeing and experience; and he chose to assert that art is only a copying of nature and not a matter also of selection and arrangement. But in periods of deadness and insincerity, the mute appeal of a Millet living afar off in the quiet woods is unheeded; it needs a big combative fellow, with self-advertisement and beat of drum and loud-voiced blustering exaggeration, to get a hearing and compel a following. It was this part to which nature had fitted Courbet, and which he played with gusto, to the dismay of the academical painters, but attracting the younger men to a fresh study of nature and compelling older men, like Bouguereau and Gerome,

to infuse some semblance of life into their pictures; giving a death-blow also to the idea that prettiness is beauty.

In his contempt for prettiness he often chose subjects which may fairly be called ugly; but that he had a sense of beauty may be seen in his landscapes; and that mingled with it was a capacity for deep emotion, appears in his marines, these last being his most impressive work. Moreover, in all his works, whether attractive or not to the student of mere subject, he proved himself a powerful painter, painting in broad, free manner, with a fine feeling for color, and with a firmness of pigment that made all his representations very real and stirring. Since his day, and in consequence of his pounding influence, painting has to a considerable extent broken loose from the shackles of conventional formulas, and the sickliness of mere prettiness and sentimentality. The painter, instead of being satisfied to tint his pictures, has learned the lesson of painting, and gone again to nature for his motives and instruction. Modern art thereby is more vigorous and wholesome.

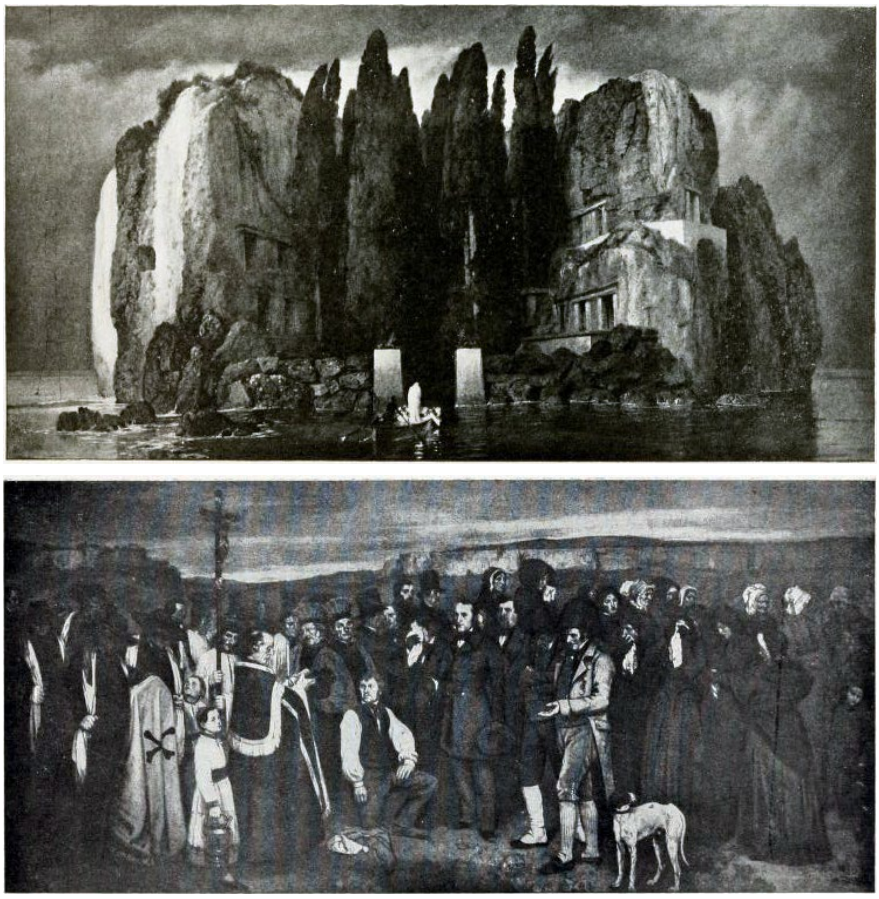
While recognizing this, however, we must not forget that Courbet went too far in condemning the Classicists, just as the latter exceeded reason in their wholesale condemnation of him. We cannot agree with them that to represent life as it really appears, is vulgar and commonplace; nor with him that painting needs no formulas, that it can ignore, for example, rules of composition; that it is impudence to paint what one has never seen, and foolish to learn of the great masters of the past; that "imagination is rubbish and reality the one true muse."

For while art should draw continual nourishment from nature, we must remember that nature is not art. For art displays itself in selecting from nature and arranging what it has borrowed in such a way as to produce a balanced harmonious ensemble. Thus, the wide landscape spread out before us, as we sit on a hilltop, may seem, as is so often the case in nature, a perfectly balanced whole; yet, if the artist selects a portion of it suitable for the size of his canvas, he will have to adjust the parts of this part, add to them, or leave out some details, if he would make his picture balanced and harmonious. There is no doubt that Courbet himself did this in the case of his marines and landscapes, notwithstanding his assertions that he painted only

just what he saw. In a word, he had the artist's instinct of selection, however much he may have kicked against the restrictions of rules.

And now that we realize something of the man and of his motives as a painter, let us turn again to his *Funeral at Ornans*. "A masquerade funeral," the critics called it; "a sneer at the religious ceremony" — but surely the bearers are performing their task with a simple sense of responsibility; the coffin is not sensationally forced into prominence, but, on the contrary, introduced into the picture with much reserve; priest and crucifer may display no emotion, but they are showing ordinary attention to their duties; one of the little acolytes, as a boy will, is showing inattention, but throughout the rest of the group, the persons are exhibiting different varieties of feeling from deep affliction to almost complete indifference, just as one may observe to-day on any occasion of a largely attended funeral.

A sensationalist would have emphasized every point that could extract our sympathies — the coffin, the beauty of the service, the grief of the mourners, the yawning grave. Everything would have been keyed up to a dramatic intensity. But Courbet, with a wider vision, and perhaps a larger sympathy, has viewed the incident in its real relation to life. "Loss," as Tennyson says, "is common to the race"; death plunges a little circle of near and dear ones into grief, and causes a slight stir of respectful interest in a somewhat larger circle of social or business acquaintances; but the world, outside of them, goes on its way of work and pleasure, and nature, as typified in that level line of landscape, is absolutely indifferent. When you come to think of it, this picture, by merging the poignancy of grief in surroundings of mere respect, and by framing the little incident in the vast indifference of the world outside of it, has struck a deeper note of human tragedy than any highly wrought-up spectacle of mere sorrow could have done. It also proves how much greater than his theories was Courbet himself. The reason is, that he had the faculty of great portrait-painters of seizing the character of his subject; not so much on the few occasions that he really painted portraits, but in a more general way in all his work. Whether it was landscape, marine, or men, women, or animals, that he painted, he represented the physical aspect of the subject with such force and actuality, that every one of his subjects suggests an actual individuality. You may note this



Top: The Isle of the Dead, Boecklin
Bottom: Funeral at Ornans, Courset

in the faces and figures of the people round the grave. They are all real people, who for a few minutes have left their real concerns in a real world to pay their respects to the reality of death.

And now let us turn to Boecklin's *Isle of the Dead*. While Courbet stands firm and steady on the earth, the German painter-poet lifts our imagination into the upper region of the spirit. The little boat with the upright figure, robed in white (not in black, observe), is the focus-point to which the composition is adjusted, and to which our eyes are drawn in preparation for the start of our imagination. Compare this ferry-boat with that of Charon's in Delacroix's picture of *Dante and Virgil*, the agony of writhing forms, Charon's terrific energy,

and in the distance the flames of Phlegethon. Here the boat with its quick and dead is isolated; an inexpressible calm broods over it; its littleness approaches noiselessly a greater calm, a vaster isolation. Its frailty upon the shifting water bears the chances and changes of mortality to a resting-place that has the suggestion of immemorial permanence. I find myself thinking of that solitary peak above Vailima, where what is mortal of Robert Louis Stevenson reposes. Far down below upon the island shore is the lapping of ocean that to human eye stretches shoreless; around and above the bed of rest, the sky's infinity; not "earth to earth, dust to dust," but the atom of spirit united to the Universal Spirit. So Boecklin has pictured the entrance of the Dead into the infinite seclusion from all we call the world, into communion with the immensity of the Elements.

It is characteristic of him that he has not attempted to lift our imagination to such heights by representing the island in a purely imaginary way, as a spot that the elements unaided have fashioned out of nature. Men have been here before; living, vigorous men, who have walled off the encroachments of the ocean, set up piers of hewn stone; possibly planted the cypresses, certainly honeycombed the rocks and builded up tombs. An island such as this may exist somewhere; it is not geologically impossible, and might have been wrought to its purpose of a burial-place, as this has been. Thus, always, Boecklin's imagination is based upon facts; and from these facts of knowledge we can proceed, step by step, to the point where knowledge ceases and imagination makes a leap into the beyond.

To appreciate this, let us glance at the process of Boecklin's own development as a painter. The son of a Swiss merchant, he was born in Basel, "one of the most prosaic towns in Europe." At nineteen he entered the art school at Düsseldorf, then the center of the school of sentimental and anecdotal pictures, but was advised by his master to proceed to Brussels, where he copied the old Dutch masters. In this way he learned the actual art of painting, which in Germany had been neglected, the subject being held of more importance than the method of representing it. From Brussels he passed to Paris, and studied in the Louvre, whence he made his way to Rome. Though he returned for a time to Germany and after 1886 lived until his death in Zurich, the country which affected his life, where he lived during

that period in which his particular genius unfolded itself, was Italy. It was from the Roman Campagna, sad and grand, with its vast stretches, broken by ruins; from the fantastic rocks of Tivoli, where the Anio plunges down in cataracts, overhung with luxuriant growth of trees and shrubs and vines; from the smoothly sloping hills near Florence, dotted with villas and olive orchards, overlooking the valley and the winding of the Arno, that he drew the inspiration for his landscapes.

Like the Frenchmen, Poussin and Claude Lorrain, in the seventeenth century, and many other German artists of his own time, he introduced into his pictures "a harmonious blending of figures with the landscape." But, unlike these other painters, he does not depict some historical, mythical, or Biblical subject and then make his landscape conform to the action and sentiment of the figures. With him the love of landscape was first and foremost; whereupon, having conceived the mood and character which his landscape should express, he put in figures to correspond with them. This, as we have seen, is what Corot did, whose figures are embodiments of the spirit of the scene. But Boecklin went much further than he in this direction.

In the first place, in the range and variety of the moods of nature which he interpreted, so that his figures, the offspring of his landscapes, touch deeper and more varied notes. Here in the narrow solitude of rocks and trees, a hermit is scourging his bare back, before a rude cross, while a raven hovers overhead; elsewhere on a rocky hillside the silence is broken by the cry of Pan, who grins to see how he has startled the goatherd and his goats; or again, robed figures move in a stately single line through a sacred grove, while others bow before a smoking altar. Further, as the Greeks peopled their streams and woods and waves with creatures of their imagination, so Boecklin makes the waterfall take shape as a nymph, or the mists which rise above the water-source wreathe into forms of merry children; or in some wild spot hurls centaurs together in fierce combat, or makes the slippery, moving wave give birth to Nereids and Tritons. Yet even here his imagination works with originality. These sea-creatures, lolling on the rocks or floating lazily on the water, are full of sensuous enjoyment; there is cruelty in their faces as there is beneath the surface of the smiling sea. Nor are his centaurs shapely, with grand

heads, like the Greek ones; they are shaggy and shambling with primitive savagery, creatures of a fierce time while the world was still in the making.

Boecklin's imagination went even further; he invented new forms, as in *A Rocky Chasm*, where there issues from a crevice a kind of dragon, web-footed, with long craning neck and a pointed feeble head, a creature as eerie as the dim abyss in which it harbors.

He was, in fact, a Greek in his healthy love of nature and his instinct for giving visible expression to her voices; a modern in his feeling for the moods of nature; and in his union of the two, unique. Moreover, he was a great colorist. "At the very time," writes Muther, "when Richard Wagner lured the colors of sound from music, with a glow of light such as no master had kindled before, Boecklin's symphonies of color streamed forth like a crashing orchestra. Many of his pictures have such an ensnaring brilliancy that the eye is never weary of feasting upon their floating splendor. Indeed, later generations will probably honor him as the greatest color-poet of the century."

Boecklin as well as Courbet was a man of fine physique and wholesome robustness; but, whereas the German's mind was as sane as his body, the Frenchman's lacked this admirable poise. He had always been a revolutionary in art, and lost no opportunity of being one in politics. From the consequences of his share in the Revolution of 1848 he was shielded by some influential friends; but, when the French army had been defeated by the Germans at Sedan in 1871 and the terror of the Commune had been established in Paris, he threw himself into the turmoil, and received from the self-constituted government the position of Minister of Fine Arts. He managed to save the Louvre and the Luxembourg from the fury of the mob, but in order to do so had to let it wreak its madness on the Vendome column. Nevertheless, when order was restored, he was held accountable for the destruction of the latter, and was fined a large sum which more than swallowed up his fortune, and in addition he was banished. Broken in spirit, he retired to Vevay on the Lake of Geneva, to die.

CHAPTER 24
Dante Gabriel Rossetti / William Holman Hunt

1828 – 1882	1827 – 1910
Pre-Raphaelite	Pre-Raphaelite
Brotherhood, England	Brotherhood, England

In 1850, the year in which Courbet's *Funeral at Ornans* aroused the anger of the French critics, London was amused by the appearance of Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini* ("Behold the Handmaid of the Lord") and Holman Hunt's *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary*. It was not only the pictures, but even more the pretensions of their authors that excited ribaldry. A year before, these two young men, Rossetti being then twenty-one and Hunt twenty-two, had joined with another young painter, John Millais, and with three young sculptors, James Collinson, Frederick George Stephens, and Thomas Woolner, and with Rossetti's younger brother, William M. Rossetti, in forming a society. They had taken to themselves the title of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and were in the habit of affixing to their signatures the letters, P. R. B.

The object of the Brotherhood was revolt against existing views and conditions of art; in its original intention not unlike the revolt of Courbet, a plea for realism. He was ridiculing the dry formalism of the Classicists, and scoffing at the way in which painters allowed themselves to be bound by the "worn-out" traditions of Raphael; advocating instead a representation of nature as it actually appears to the eye of the painter. In like manner the Brotherhood protested against the cult of Raphael, which, since its introduction into England by Sir Joshua Reynolds, had reduced the teaching of art to arbitrary rules about lines of grace and stately compositions, flowing draperies, and artificial poses, substituting a cast-iron system for the free and truthful rendering of nature. But while the sturdy Courbet flung all traditions aside and found his motives in the present, the Brotherhood, under the dominating influence of Rossetti, who, as we

shall see, was already a deep student of Dante and filled with the spirit of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, sought the impulse of a new tradition in the painters who preceded Raphael: Fra Angelico, for example, and Botticelli.

These "Primitives" belonged to the springtime of the Renaissance, looking out upon the world with fresh young eyes; even their lack of skill in drawing and their naive sentiment were refreshing in comparison with the stilted, pompous insincerity and soullessness of the modern followers of Raphael. Even the latter himself was attacked by Ruskin, who had stepped forward as the expounder and champion of the Brotherhood's ideals. After citing with what truth to the facts of nature the great masters, and especially Titian, rendered every detail of the foregrounds of their landscapes with most laborious fidelity, he proceeded to contrast the unreality of Raphael's conceptions, taking, as a text, his cartoon of *Christ Walking upon the Water.*

> Note [he says] the handsomely curled hair and neatly tied sandals of the men who have been out all night in the sea mists and on slimy decks. Note their convenient dresses for going a-fishing, with trains that lie a yard along the ground, and goodly fringes — all made to match, an apostolic fishing costume. Note how Peter especially (whose chief glory was in his wet coat girt about him, and naked limbs) is enveloped in folds and fringes, so as to kneel and hold his keys with grace. No fire of coals at all, nor lonely mountain shore, but a pleasant Italian landscape, full of villas and churches, and a flock of sheep to be pointed at; and the whole group of apostles, not around Christ, as they would have been naturally, but straggling away in a line, that they may all be seen. The simple truth is, that the moment we look at the picture we feel our belief in the whole thing taken away. There is visibly no possibility of that group ever having existed, in any place or on any occasion. It is all a mere mythic absurdity, and faded concoction of fringes and muscular arms, and curly heads of Greek philosophers. Now the evil consequences of the

> acceptance of this kind of religious idealism for true, were instant and manifold. So far as it was received and trusted in by thoughtful people it only served to chill all the conceptions of sacred history which they might otherwise have obtained. Whatever they could have fancied for themselves about the wild, strange, infinitely stern, infinitely tender, infinitely varied veracities of the life of Christ, was blotted out by the vapid fineries of Raphael. The rough Galilean pilot, the orderly custom-receiver, and all the questioning wonder and fire of uneducated apostleship, were obscured under an antique mask of philosophic faces and long robes.

And having made a stand for truth to nature and the probabilities of fact, Ruskin concludes with the statement of his belief that in modern times, and especially in northern climes where people are so much dressed up in clothes, the representation of physical strength and beauty can no longer be the highest aim of art; and in an age which is before all things intellectual, painting should make spiritual expression, instead of form, the object of its most serious study. The art of the new age must be religious, mystic, and thoughtful, and at the same time true to nature. And it was because the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood seemed to recognize this, that he asserted it was going to be epoch-making.

Probably no critic of art ever had such a knowledge and love of nature as Ruskin, and few have equaled him in the intuitive appreciation of what is fine in art. But he was so much bigger a man than a mere art critic — a moralist, a scientist, instinctively religious, versed in literature, and possessed of rare literary gifts — that he could not help looking at painting, as it were, through these different-colored glasses and wishing to have it conform to the color of each. He could not, at any rate he did not, recognize the independent status of painting: that it is not primarily a means of inculcating morals, of teaching religion or science, or of playing second fiddle to the more elaborately explanatory possibilities of literature; but that it is first and foremost a visible expression of material things, just as music is of immaterial ideas. The latter is independent of morals,

religion, and of descriptive or dramatic story, although it may contribute very forcibly to all of them. So painting may; yet this is not its primary function. It is an independent art, whose chief concern is with external appearances.

Moreover, though Ruskin was as earnest an advocate of truth to nature as Courbet, he did not understand the meaning of artistic truth. While Courbet sought a powerful generalization of the whole subject, expressed by means of a broad and large technic, Ruskin taught that the artist should render every characteristic detail with minute exactness. If he painted rocks, for example, he must show unmistakably to what particular geological species they belonged; and in his foregrounds must render the blades of grass and the flowers with "the most laborious botanical fidelity." The artist, whose proper function is to reveal to eyes less sensitive and trained than his own "a new heaven and a new earth," he would have had pother over nature with a microscope, emulating the patient investigations of the botanist and geologist. In fact, he preached — for he was even more a preacher than an art critic — a sort of religion of truth, that tended to enslave the artist's freedom of vision and imagination still more than the requirements of the church had done in the days of the Early Renaissance. The result was for a long time disastrous to English painting and to English public taste; for it established as a standard of excellence a petty rendering in smooth, precise manner of the little insignificances, at the expense of the larger truth of the whole. Ruskin was fond of quoting from the Bible, but missed the application of one text — "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."

The Brotherhood, as a compact group, bound together by a common regard for sincerity and high purpose, lasted only a short time. Its members drifted into separate lines of work, yet its influence upon art both in England and on the Continent was far-reaching. However, the direction which it took may better be considered after we have studied the two men, Rossetti and Holman Hunt, who proved to be the most distinctively original members of the disbanded Brotherhood.

Ruskin's contention that modern art must be concerned with spiritual expression was realized in Rossetti; that it must be religious in motive and truthful to the minutest detail, in Holman Hunt. This will be apparent in a study of the two pictures here reproduced. In *The Blessed Damozel* our interest is drawn toward the face of the woman looking down; everything else is contributory to the impression that it arouses; even the title excites our wonder. Who is she, and why that expression of her face? In *The Light of the World,* however, it is the matter-of-factness of the picture that first attracts us. Its title, even if we have not immediately noticed the crown of thorns, makes us aware that the figure is Christ. But there is here no grandeur of drapery, or noble pose, or elevated type of countenance. The last is that of a man of the people; only the splendor of the gold-embroidered cloak and its jeweled clasp suggest that the man is more than ordinary. He knocks at a door, overgrown with vines and weeds, a door, therefore, that has remained long shut. Every spray and leaf and flower is lighted sharply by the lantern. Behind the figure, forming a halo round the head, appears the full moon. We remember the text, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

The appearance of this picture in 1854 had a peculiar timeliness. For many years a great awakening had been going on in the Church of England, corresponding to the political, social, and industrial awakening that was spreading over the country as a result of the extension of the franchise by the first Reform Act, and of the introduction of steam and railroads. As a set-off to what seemed to many minds only a material revival, began a religious one, the nursery and stronghold of which was the University of Oxford, so that it became known as the Oxford Movement. Its aims were threefold: to uphold the direct descent of the Church of England from the days of the Apostles, to promote religious piety, and to bring back to public worship the beauty of ritual that it had had prior to the Reformation. Everywhere throughout the land the clergy and people had been asleep, the cathedrals and churches had fallen into decay, but the new spirit of devotion aroused a longing to revive the outward beauty of the past, and one of the most important phases of the movement became the Gothic Revival. The consequence was that, while the



Left: Oath of the Horatii, Jacques Louis David
Right: Dante and Virgil, Eugene Delacroix

most energetic movement in French art at that time was toward a true representation of the world of to-day, the English one devoted itself to a renewal of the past; and not of the classic traditions, but of those of the Middle Ages.

One can now understand how this picture, *The Light of the World*, appealed to the religious feeling of its day. People saw in the doorway overrun with vines and blocked with weeds, an allegory of what had been the condition of the churches and their congregations before the awakening; until Christ, with the lantern of truth, had stolen in upon the night of spiritual sleep, and aroused the sleepers with his knock. After its exhibition in London it went on a pilgrimage

throughout the country, and hundreds of thousands of copies were sold in engravings.

In the first place it represented Christ, not in the conventional classic draperies, but in his capacity of priest, in the revived vestments of the church — the alb and cope; moreover, not with a head like a Greek philosopher's, but with the features of a man of the people and the expression of a visionary. In the second place, the picture was full of highly wrought detail; beautiful plant-forms that recalled the delicate traceries of Gothic decoration: metalwork and jewelry and embroidered needlework, the crafts which were being revived in the service of religion. Furthermore, the very exactness with which all these were rendered gave pleasure to a public, that under Ruskin's instruction had learned to look for two qualities in a picture — a beautiful story, preferably a religious one, and a patiently accurate representation of detail.

The success of the picture determined the future course of Hunt's work; which has remained religious in subject and minutely realistic. He visited the Holy Land, that he might study the type and characteristics of the descendants of the Bible personages, the appearance of the sacred landscape, the customs of the people, their mode of life, and the implements and utensils of daily use. Accumulating the results of his researches, he sought by means of exact rendering of modern conditions to get as near as possible to the probable conditions of the past.

The most remarkable example is *The Shadow of the Cross,* in which he represents Christ in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth. He not only gave him the homely appearance of an ordinary artisan, but carried the truth to facts so far as to paint him naked except for a leather apron; a strong brown-skinned man, with the muscles shown and even the hair upon the breast and legs. In front of him is the bench at which he has been planing, and shavings of wood cover the floor. He has paused for a moment's rest and is stretching his arms, and the evening sun streaming through the window throws the shadow of his body upon the wall in the form of a cross. This suggestion is so solemn, and the intensely religious conviction of the artist so apparent in the picture, that, what might have been merely a dry archaeological inventory, is lifted up to unmistakable nobility. And

this, notwithstanding the harshness of coloring, the abrupt lines of the composition, the lack of atmosphere, and the baldness and metallic glitter of the textures. In fact, despite the absence of those qualities which one looks for in good painting, Hunt's pictures are strangely impressive.

Indirectly they gave rise to a new motive in religious painting. Touched by the human as well as the spiritual beauty of the Saviour's life, artists, such as Fritz von Uhde in Germany, and Lhermitte in France, have represented him as once more visibly moving among men. The former, for example, has interpreted the subject of *Let the Little Children come unto Me,* by a scene in a village school in the Bavarian Alps. From the sunshine outside the Saviour has stepped in, and the peasant children are gathered round with looks of wonder, drawn to him by the sweetness of his invitation. Lhermitte, on his part, among other kindred subjects, pictured a family of peasants at their lunch, bowing their heads, while Christ himself, seated at the humble board, pronounces a blessing on the food. Religion to these people is the chief solace of their lives of toil, and so unquestioning is their simple faith, that the miraculous appearance of the Christ, treated with utmost reverence, as it is, seems to have a touching and beautiful naturalness.

And now let us turn to Rossetti. His father, an Italian patriot, who had sought refuge in London, where he became professor of Italian at King's College, was a distinguished Dante scholar. His children were all gifted. Maria Francesca, the elder daughter, wrote a critical work, entitled, "The Shadow of Dante"; Christina, the younger, became celebrated as a poet; and their younger brother, William Michael, is a well-known writer and critic. Dante Gabriel, the subject of our present study, was poet as well as painter.

He was extraordinarily precocious, very early acquainted with Scott and Shakspeare, and the author at six years old of a drama in blank verse. But the chief influence of his childhood was the worship of Dante. He knew the poems by heart. "The mystical poet became his guide through life and led him to Fra Angelico, the mystic of painting." He attended Gary's drawing-school and the schools of the Royal Academy; but could not find in their systematic methods the help he wanted; therefore he sought the advice of Ford Madox

Brown, and eventually of Holman Hunt. He was impatient to paint the pictures that thronged his brain, and impatient of the dry routine of steady instruction, and in consequence never acquired a complete command of drawing. Perhaps he was encouraged not to try for it, in consequence of his fondness for subjects from Dante and his instinctive feeling that they must be represented with the almost childlike simplicity of feeling, the mystic dreaminess and sweetly embarrassed manner of Fra Angelico and the other "Primitives" who adorned the early garden of the Renaissance. For in his heart he belonged to that time; it was as if the spirit of those children of painting had, after many transmigrations, become reincarnated on the banks of the Thames.

And while he persevered in painting, he was continually experimenting in poetry. The exquisitely beautiful poem, afterward pictured in *The Blessed Damozel*, was written in his nineteenth year. The picture was not painted till 1879, when he was fifty-one. In the interval he had known the woman who became to his life and art what Saskia had been to Rembrandt's. In 1850 he met Miss Elizabeth Siddal, a milliner's assistant, who was introduced to him as a model. According to William M. Rossetti she was "tall, finely formed, with a lofty neck, and regular, yet somewhat uncommon features, greenish blue, unsparkling eyes, large perfect eyelids, brilliant complexion, and a lavish wealth of coppery golden hair." She satisfied at once his conception of a perfectly balanced soul and body, of soul-beauty shining through the beauty of form, which was his ideal of woman. She became also his ideal of Beatrice, and as such he painted her many times. He loved her, but for some reason marriage was postponed for ten years, and then after scarcely two years of married life she died. But the memory of her abided with him, and almost all his subsequent painting was a representation, in one character or another, of his Beloved. And, with the years, her type of beauty expanded, losing its girlishness in richer ampleness, becoming more glorified in his imagination.

By the time that he painted *The Blessed Damozel*, he was broken in health, old before his time, and not far from death. In 1870 the volume of his poems had been published, and attacked violently by Robert Buchanan under the title of, "The Fleshly School of Poetry."

Suffering from the loss of his wife, and being the victim of insomnia, he was wounded out of all proportion to the circumstances, fancied that a conspiracy had been formed against him, and became a prey to the most morbid sensibility. In his misery he grew more addicted to the use of chloral, which he had taken to alleviate insomnia. Only at intervals, encouraged by his friends, who clung to him, could he work.

There is, therefore, a great tragedy embodied in this picture. Read the poem, written in the springtime of his life, when yet he was only dreaming of what love might be. Is it not strangely prophetic, that even then, it was not the possession, but the loss of the Beloved, that filled his thoughts?

> The blessed damozel leaned out
> From the gold bar of heaven;
> Her eyes were deeper than the depth
> Of waters stilled at even.
> • • • • •
> Her seemed she scarce had been a day
> One of God's choristers;
> The wonder was not yet quite gone
> From that still look of hers;
> Albeit, to them she left, her day
> Had counted as ten years.
> • • • • •
> It was the rampart of God's house
> That she was standing on;
> • • • • •
> So high, that looking downward thence
> She scarce could see the sun.
> • • • • •
> "I wish that he were come to me,
> For he will come," she said.

Since those lines were written, she had come to him, possessed him, been taken from him, and become his forever.

Devotion to this one woman was the source at once of strength and of weakness to his art. Of strength, because, in the first place, it attracted him to outward appearances and gave form and substance

to his dreams, and taught him to express the invisible through the visible, while enabling him to realize the conceptions with which his mind was stored and suggesting others to his imagination. On the other hand, it was a source of weakness, because it narrowed him to one type on which he perpetually harped with variations, so that masses of coppery golden hair, heavy-lidded dreamy eyes, a mouth with curling lips, and a long full throat appear and reappear with various degrees of exaggerated emphasis; while his imagination, absorbed in the contemplation of one idea, gives birth continually to one slightly varying form of highly wrought sentiment. He retreats from the manifold sensations of the open, sun-cleansed world, into a hothouse, whose air is laden with the fragrance of the orchid.

Yet we should remember that this single devotion to one type, while it limited his art, may have been necessary to it, the only thing that could have ripened the fruit of which it was capable. We have seen how Dante, and especially the poet's mystic love for Beatrice, filled his early thoughts. When he met Elizabeth Siddal, he met his own Beatrice; henceforth she was to be to him the incarnation of his own spiritual life, the inspiration of his art as the Florentine damozel had been to Dante's. Nor, while she was the companion and nourishment of his spiritual solitude, is it to be assumed that but for her he would have gone outside himself and nourished his art with the rains and sunshine of the actual world. As we have said, he did not belong to our own age, but to Dante's.

By the latter, and the poets of his time, who followed the "sweet new style" that had been derived from Bologna, love was regarded as the mark of the gentle heart and the service of love as the means of realizing the ideals of the spirit, so that the particular woman was rather a visible embodiment of these ideals than a being to be loved and possessed in a human way. If, as seems well-nigh certain, this was also Rossetti's conception of art and life, it is clear he could have found the best within him only by this exclusive devotion to one type.

He lived in a dream-world, thronged with emotions. These soul-thoughts, too deep, too wide, too vague and infinite to be captured by brush or pen, being inexpressible, he yet tried, as far as possible, to express, sometimes in poems, sometimes in pictures. The latter are brilliant in color, glowing with brightly hued fabrics, precious stones,

and flowers; a world of glorious fancy, in which the figures live as in a trance. Never since Perugino had there been figures so wrapped in spiritual solitude as these. But Rossetti's are fuller of expression, suggesting not only mystic ecstasy but a wide range of spiritual expressiveness. Yet, like the Umbrian artist's, they are calm in attitude and slow in gesture, and through this very immobility express the most vivid intensity of inner life.

Though courting seclusion in his London home, at Cheyne Walk, Chelsea,[23] Rossetti nevertheless became the center of a group of men whose influence on art has been wide-spread. Among them were William Morris, Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, George Frederick Watts, Swinburne, the poet, and the novelist and poet, George Meredith. Through Morris and Walter Crane a new impulse was given to decorative art. Sick of the tedious, soulless repetition of Renaissance ornament, these men went farther back to a study of Gothic and Celtic ornament, which led them to a study of nature's plant- and flower-forms as motives for decoration. Out of this arose a new spirit of invention, which spread over Europe and to some extent has appeared in America, resulting in the revival of a desire for beauty in objects of art-craftsmanship, and in an increase of original creative skill on the part of the designers, until decorative art has once more become a live one.

That phase of Pre-Raphaelism which is represented by Rossetti, "the painter of the soul," was continued by Burne-Jones and was welcomed in France by some artists who were tired of the long series of pictures dealing with the external life of peasants and social functions. They too began to try and express the subtle emotions of the spirit; and from France the new movement extended to Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, and Austria. The Brotherhood, in its beginning, had started a magazine, called the "Germ." Only four numbers appeared; but the seed, scattered, after long years brought forth flowers, the blue flowers of idealism.

[23] The home of artists, also, so wide apart as Holbein and Whistler.

CHAPTER 25
Karl Theobor Von Piloty / Mariano Fortuny

1826 – 1886 — Munich School of Germany

1838 – 1874 — Spanish-Parisian School

In the *Spanish Marriage* there is a profusion of beautiful detail to gladden the eye; in the canvas by Piloty, a great deal to stimulate our appetite for historical incidents. We already feel a curiosity to become acquainted with this particular one; we reach for a history to discover who these people are and how they happen to find themselves in the circumstances represented; and, having read the story, we shall proceed to search the picture to identify the persons and see how the incident has been portrayed. All of which has, strictly speaking, nothing to do with the appreciation of the painting, as a painting. On the other hand, to appreciate the *Spanish Marriage*, we need no help from the outside; the incident depicted explains itself. We note the moment selected is the signing of the register; and, having done so, we are free to enjoy without any interruption the brilliant groups of figures and the exquisite delicacy of the rococo screen and the other details of the sacristy; or, if we were facing the original, would step backward, so that the sparkle and luster of its coloring might affect us as a whole.

Further, let us contrast the two pictures from the point of view of composition. In Fortuny's the figures are sprinkled like gay flowers across the canvas, and surrounded by open spaces; the impression produced being one of spaciousness and dignity, united to elegant sprightliness. In that of Piloty, however, the figures, following the line of a letter S, occupy almost all the composition. Except for the little piece of ground in front and the view beyond the arch, there are no quiet spaces in the picture, and both these, you will observe, are cut into by crossing lines. Moreover, Fortuny has massed his shade beyond the screen, giving a depth and mystery to the distance that lend additional piquancy to the figures in the foreground, while

helping to unite them into one composition. Piloty's composition, however, with its scattered light and shade, is arranged to give prime importance to the center group composed of Thusnelda and her child and handmaids, and a somewhat slighter prominence to the emperor, Tiberius, and the bevy of court ladies. Below the latter are the lighted figures of the old bard and the German soldier to whom he is bound, which form, as it were, a prelude to the central mass of light.

Now, while the composition of each picture is regulated with deliberate artifice, Fortuny's is so tactful that the scene appears real and impresses us at once as a single harmonious whole, in comparison with which Piloty's seems artificial and confused and broken up. Perhaps the confusion is intentional, the artist seeking in this way to create a suggestion of stupendous impressive- ness, corresponding to the strange, variegated, tumultuous spectacle that the actual incident must have presented. If so, in order to attain his object, he has sacrificed the unity of his picture, which, as it now stands, is really a combination of several compositions — the group with the bear in the front; the group of women; the emperor's group, and that of the senators at the back welcoming Germanicus, the conqueror — a distribution of separate incidents ingeniously linked together.

And now examine more closely the individual figures. Those in the *Spanish Marriage*, how they brim with life and character! Note the attitude of the priest, as he rises from his chair and leans over the table while the bride-groom signs his name. What an elderly fop the latter is, arrayed in a delicate lilac costume! The bride is in a white gown, trimmed with flowered lace, and has a wreath of orange-blossoms in her luxuriant black hair. She is toying with a fan, enjoying its pretty decorations, while she listens to the talk of a girl friend, who leans forward with a most delightful gesture of dainty grace. How cleverly the artist has suggested in the conduct of all the people present, that this union of age and youth is not an affair of the heart! Observe particularly the indifference which the couple sitting on the right display to what is going on; while an old man has removed to a far corner, and sits with his hat on his head, as if in contempt of the whole proceeding.

Nor in Piloty's picture is there any lack of characteristic gestures and poses; every figure enacts some separate part in the drama; each

is drawn with correctness and power. Yet, I suspect, the sum total of the impression that we receive is not so much of life and reality as of an elaborate spectacle, such as one may occasionally see on the stage of a theater. We can scarcely escape the suspicion of artificiality. The tableau has been arranged by an ingenious stage-manager, who has packed it with stirring situations and piled effect upon effect. The scene-painter and costumier having done their share, he has drilled the crowd of supernumeraries until every one of them knows what he is expected to do and does it with all his might, as if the success of the whole depended upon his individual effort. The result is magnificent, but overpowering, unreal, stagy. It is too ambitious and self-important, too suggestive of the high-sounding programme, announced by a German historian of the period. "We stand," he. wrote, "with our knowledge, culture, and insight, on a summit from which we overlook the whole past. The Orient, Greece, and Rome, the Middle Ages, the Reformation and Modern times, spread like a universal panorama before us… To bury one's self in the past, to get at the most essential meaning of its life, to awaken what is dead by knowledge, to renew what has vanished by art…such is the vivifying work of our time."

But is this picture vivifying? It may succeed in wakening knowledge of the past, but does it renew its life? Certainly it is interesting as an illustration to that page of history which relates how Thusnelda, the wife of Harminius, a German prince, was betrayed by her own father, Segestes, into the hands of the Romans, in order to curry favor with Germanicus. The latter general's success had aroused the jealousy of Tiberius. Roman emperors lived in constant fear of the ascendancy of a victorious general, so Germanicus was recalled and allowed a triumph, which the queen is compelled to adorn. Her humiliation the miserable Segestes is forced to witness, as he stands, a butt for the gibes of the senators on the emperor's right. In the latter's bowed head may well be brooding a dread of Germanicus, and of the menace to Rome, if these magnificent Barbarians should ever discover their own strength and the Romans' growing weakness.

In my last sentence, you will observe, I have obtruded an idea of my own. You will not find it recorded in the brief account by Tacitus of this episode; it can only be guessed at by inference from this





Top: Thusnelda at the Triumph of Germanicus,
Karl Theodor Von Piloty
Bottom: Spanish Marriage, Mariano Fortuny

picture. But I obtrude it intentionally, to suggest how much more effectively a writer could represent this scene. He would make you realize, not only the outward appearance of the spectacle, but also the inward emotions that are stirring in the individual actors. He would fathom, not only the thoughts in the brain of Tiberius, but those of the woman who proudly marches past him; those of the Roman ladies; of that bard and the German warrior to whom he is bound; of that woman on the left who darts her arm and imprecations at the captive queen; of the people vociferously applauding the victorious general; and of what lies concealed in the mind of the conqueror, calmly uplifted against the lighted distance.

The fact is that a picture of this sort, by attempting to represent so much, passes beyond the point at which it can be a single unified whole; steps outside of its own special province as a record of what the eye can grasp without assistance from other sources, and challenges rivalry with literature, on the latter's own ground, and, therefore, naturally is worsted. A clever writer could represent this scene to your imagination, and move your emotions, much more vividly than this picture does.

This is true of most so-called "historical" pictures. There have been exceptions, notably the *Surrender of Breda* by Velasquez, to which we have alluded in another chapter. But in that everything is made subordinate to one episode and to one moment in it — namely, that in which the Vanquished hands the key of the city to the Victor. On the part of the one is exhibited noble resignation; on that of the other, an equally noble magnanimity; in this most trying ordeal each proves himself a hero. For our enjoyment of the picture we do not need to know their names or the circumstances that lead up to the incident. Although the event commemorated occurred in Velasquez's lifetime, he passed beyond the local and temporary and gave his representation a typal significance.

But this is precisely what Piloty has not done. Like most of the "historical" painters, he has selected a subject, that would yield opportunity for striking contrasts and for display of skill in drawing and archaological research; and then, by crowding the canvas with learned details, cleverly represented, seeks to impose upon the spectator an impression of something grander than the ordinary — heroic.

For, as a rule, the "historical" painter thinks that the representation of life of his own day is "vulgar"; he has learned to draw the human form and draperies after classic models, idealizing nature; and then rummages amid the dust of antiquity, to find subjects that will demonstrate his skill in representing the draperies and the nude. Turn to Piloty's picture and note the old bard on the right of the foreground. The figure is typical of the whole attitude of mind of these classical, historical, heroical painters. The body is represented partly nude, and the drapery is so arranged that the old man could not possibly walk. What could be more obviously dragged in for effect?

Most of these painters are able draftsmen, although their figures are generally coldly correct and formal, or stilted and bombastic; but few of them are good painters. Piloty, however, was an exception. He received his education at the Munich Academy, under men who were inclined to boast that they were not painters and to look down on the "colorers," just as the Classicists of the French School proclaimed that "form is everything." But after he had visited Venice, Antwerp, and Paris, he came back a skilful painter, who could render correctly the color appearance of any object he represented. Munich was ripe for something new, and his popularity was immediate. In 1852 he was appointed professor at the Academy, and by the great number of pupils who flocked to him and the influence that he extended throughout Germany, revived in that country the art of painting.

Moreover, his work, though academical, abounds in sentiment and dramatic characterization; qualities that found a ready response in German taste. For the Germans, like the English, are disposed to prefer a picture which tells a story. Piloty's, as we have seen, were historical in theme; but a very large part of modern German painting has been occupied with the little *genre* picture. These are of social or peasant life, in which the personages, generally set in an interior, are enacting some pretty sentimental scene. They are for the most part cleverly painted, so far as representing the color appearance of the objects is concerned, but usually, like Piloty's pictures, without any suggestion of real atmosphere or of the subtleties of light. It is in this respect that Piloty is not a "painter," compared with Fortuny.

The latter, after receiving the usual academical training at the

School of Fine Arts in Barcelona, won the Prix de Rome. But while he was studying the old masters in Rome, war broke out between Spain and the Emperor of Morocco. Fortuny, now twenty-three years old, received a commission from the Town Council of Barcelona to proceed to Africa and paint the exploits of the army. This experience of a few months changed the whole current of his life. The brilliance of Southern sunshine, the glowing colors of the scenery, the richness of the costumes, and the splendor of decorated trappings and weapons, the glittering movement of the life of the people — all these things fascinated him and drew his imagination into the direction of light and color. Other painters before him had been attracted by the charms of the South and the Orient, but none up to that time had so absorbed the inspiration of the color splendors, or the variegated movement of the life.

At first he introduced these qualities into a series of Moroccan subjects; then passed on to pictures, like our present one, with which his memory is particularly identified. They represent interiors decorated profusely in the style of Louis XV, known as Rococo, because the ornamentation included imitation of rockwork, shells, foliage, and intricacies of scrollwork, elaborate and profuse. These countless irregularities of surface, and the gay silk and lace and velvet costumes of the period, offered the fullest scope for color and reflected light.

Painting with an extraordinary dexterity, with a delicate sense of color-harmony, and with an impetuosity of fancy that is truly astounding, he split the light into a thousand particles, till his pictures sparkle like jewels and are as brilliant as a kaleidoscope. When he went to Paris he made a great sensation and became attached to the circle of which Meissonier was the leader. The latter's pictures are like his in the minuteness and elaborateness of their craftsmanship, but do not show the same exquisite color-sense, or skill in representing the diversities of light and atmosphere. In fact, Fortuny himself became the vogue.

He set the fashion for a class of pictures, filled with silks and satins, *bric-a-brac* and elegant trifling, distinguished by deftness of hand, but possessing no higher aim than to make a charming bouquet of color with glancing caprices of sunshine. Because they were cleverly painted they attracted extravagant admiration; but now that

clever painting has become more general, their reputation has declined.

CHAPTER 26
Edouard Manet / Jozef Israëls

1833 – 1883	1824 – 1911
Impressionistic	Modern Dutch
School of France	School

What a contrast these two pictures present! Their very titles indicate the different point of view in the two artists. *The Old Scribe* has in it the ring of an appeal to our sympathy and interest; *Girl with a Parrot*, on the contrary, is barren of any sympathetic suggestion. Manet, in fact, had no feeling for his subject, except in so far as it contributed to a purely artistic intention; but Israels added to an intention, equally artistic, the further one of entering into the humanness of his subject. He has been through his long career the painter of the Dutch poor, as Millet was of the French peasants; a painter whose work always echoes a clear note of poetry. At the same time he has been the chief influence in the modern revival of Dutch art. On the other hand, while the influence of Manet upon modern art has been even greater, his hold upon the imagination of the layman has been very slight. He was essentially a "painter's painter."

We will consider him first; because an understanding of what he did will help also to a fuller appreciation of Israels, since the latter, like all modern artists who are really painters and not mere tinters, was to some extent influenced by him.

Manet's great work was to carry further and complete the teaching of realism begun by Courbet. The hitter's realism consisted mainly in his point of view, in his habit of selecting subjects from nature and treating them as naturally as he could, with the sole purpose of representing the person or thing as it appeared to his eye. But while his subjects were realistic, his rendering of them in many respects was not. He painted realistic subjects with a recipe that he had invented for himself by studying the old masters. For example, he enveloped his pictures in what has been irreverently called "brown sauce";

moreover, his figures, rocks, waves, and trees, were real enough in form, but apt to be of a uniform rigidity of texture. Manet's further contribution was to add to realism of subject a realism of representation; to render the particular texture of each object and to surround all with nature's light and air. He restored to painting a knowledge of the truths which had been discovered by Velasquez.

This great artist had been forgotten during nearly two centuries. At length in 1857, on the occasion of the Manchester Exhibition, he was revealed to the English. The biography of him by Sir William Stirling was translated into French; Paris began to be aware of his pictures in the Louvre, and from them to be directed toward the Prado at Madrid, where the bulk of his work exists. Manet was the first to become a pupil of the Spanish master.

Now we may remember that Velasquez proved himself original, both in the way of looking at a subject and in his way of representing it; each distinguished by extraordinary realism, his motto being, "Truth, not Painting." He represented only what could be embraced by one comprehensive glance, subordinating everything to a vivid impression; and then represented what he saw as he really saw it. And the secret of that reality was that he saw everything through and in the light which surrounded it. Velasquez, like Rembrandt, painted light. But the latter, under his gray Northern sun, painted with light for the purpose of expressing the *inward* meaning of things, whereas the Spaniard retired from the glowing Southern sunshine out of doors into the gray light of his studio, for the purpose of representing realistically the *externals* of his subjects. He discovered that the subject, viewed under these conditions, appeared much flatter than it was usually represented; that form, so viewed, does not stand out with sharp contrasts of light and shade, but that it is really composed of a series of planes, reflecting more or less of light; and that the appearance of color also is the result of various degrees of light reflected. Moreover, he discovered that distance from the eye affects the prevailing or "local" color of objects, the atmosphere which intervenes introducing successive veils of gray; so that the accurate rendering of those variations resulted in a new manner of representing distance — namely, not by lineal, but by atmospheric perspective.

Manet for some years had been studying the old masters, learning

from them their different tricks of painting and producing pictures somewhat after their likeness. But all that he had learned was a knowledge of mannerisms. Until he became acquainted with the work of Velasquez, he had discovered no guiding principle or firm basis. He was modern to the finger-tips; and the Paris of his day, under the influence of Balzac, was vibrating with the realistic spirit. Courbet had demanded that painting also should be realistic in subject and point of view. But what about the method and technic of painting? Was it satisfactory to serve up a modern subject in the old brown sauce of the Bolognese? If not, how could a technic be found that would express in painting the modern spirit of analysis and subtlety that had been developed in modern literature? The answer was found in the art of Velasquez.

He had been dead just two hundred years; yet, strange fact, in his point of view he had anticipated the modern artistic tendencies toward realism, and, what was still more wonderful, had discovered for himself truths in nature that could be applied to painting so as to produce truth of artistic representation. The key-note of his discovery had been light; the study, the analysis, and the painting of light in all its different manifestations upon the surfaces of objects. To Manet, rediscovering the truth through Velasquez, and to the men who were drawn with Manet to this new-old source of inspiration, the watchword became "Fiat Lux," "Let there be Light." The subsequent story of modern progress in painting may be summed up in the one word — light. The rendering of values has become the chief technical aim of the painter; nature is being studied afresh, in order to search out and record the infinite manifestations of light; in place of a pompous grandiloquent style of meaningless painting, there has grown up one that is distinguished by keen observation, subtle discriminations, and delicate truth of rendering.

The two artists, whom we are considering in this chapter, represent pretty well the two streams into which this new energy of nature-study has flowed. Manet was satisfied with the joy of painting; content to be simply and purely a painter; but Israels has used his knowledge and his skill as a means to body forth the poetic sentiments aroused by his interest in human and physical nature.

At Nadar's gallery, in 1871, Parisians flocked to see the work of

Manet and the other men of this new group. The catalogue contained a great deal about "impressions" — for instance, *Impressions of my Pot on the Fire; Impressions of a Cat Walking.* In his criticism Claretie summed up the impressions and spoke of the exhibition as the "Salon des Impressionistes." Thus was started the name "Impressionists," which unfortunately has stuck. For it is misleading, the distinguishing aim of the so-called Impressionist School having been to study light, so that they might fitly be called "Luminarists."

The object of the new group was to teach, that the first requisite of a painter is to be able to paint. This, of course, was an attack once more on the academical and classical school, which says the first requisite is to be able to draw. It tried to enforce its point by saying it did not matter what was painted so long as it was painted well: subject was of little account; the first consideration was the painter's ability to paint. This new creed was summed up in the phrase "Art for Art's sake." The conflict over these catchwords stirred up a great deal of dust, which, however, by this time has cleared away, so that we can better understand the matter at issue.

Remember, in the first place, it was a battle-cry, the rally of this new school of realism, against the insufficiency of Courbet's realism on the one hand, and the dry formalism, on the other, of the Academy. Now, as we have had occasion to remark before, men, when they get to the fighting mood, are not troubled overmuch about logic and reasonableness. It is not the well-weighed statement, recognizing both sides of the question, that will stir their blood; but a catchword, exaggerating their own side of it, to be flung at the adversary with a certainty that, when it reaches him, it will make him dance with fury. Such was this "Art for Art's sake," shouted and reshouted, partly because it involved a great truth, perhaps even more, however, *pour enrager les bourgeois,* or, as we say in English, to make the Philistine squirm; the Philistine being that person, either artist or layman, who is perfectly satisfied with mediocrity, and above all things does not want to have his pet notions disturbed.

Now, over in England, at the period we are considering, Ruskin was contending that the highest aim of art is to teach, to uplift, especially to teach religion; which, stated in an exaggerated way, implied that the subject is the main thing. Across the water from Paris

came the retort, *A bas le sujet, l'art pour l'art.* Neither was altogether right, neither altogether wrong.

Will an art, that is based only on a keen eye and nimble fingers, satisfy men and women who have minds and souls?

On the other hand, will painting, based on beautiful ideas, satisfy us if it does not make its chief appeal to us through the eyes? if it does not reach our brain through the medium of enjoyment of the sense of sight?

Has not every art its medium of expression; the poet reaching our capacity for the highest through the medium of words; the musician, through that of sound?

But the painter, who cannot help approaching us through our sense of sight — will he, on the one hand, be wise in paying less attention to what he sees and the rendering of it than the poet does to his words, the musician to his sounds and harmonies? On the other hand, should he be satisfied to appeal only to our eyesight and leave our brains and souls untouched?

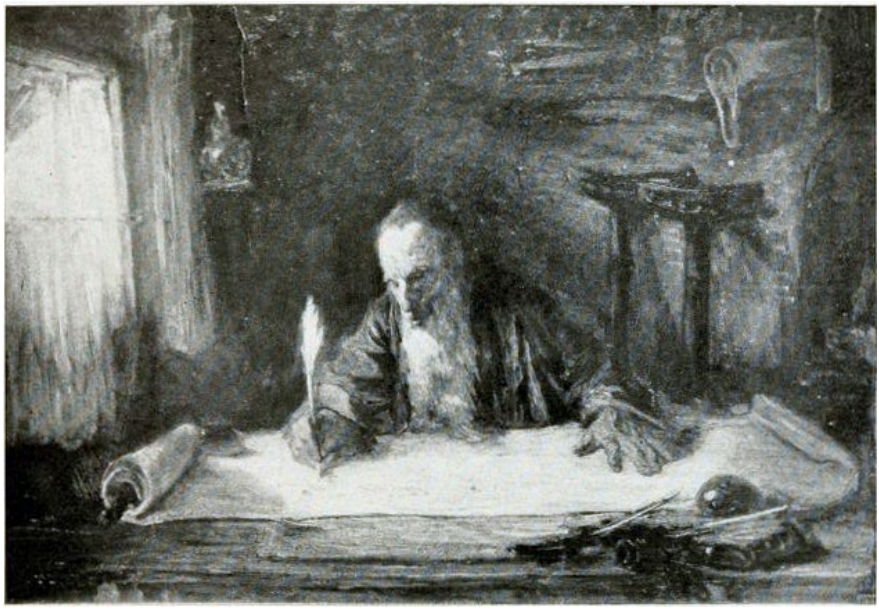
From the point of view of the layman he should not be; and those artists, who limit their appeal to the eyesight and the enjoyment derived from the sense of seeing, will have a limited following. But let us try to understand that the point of view of the layman and of the artist, however much they may draw together, must always be separate.

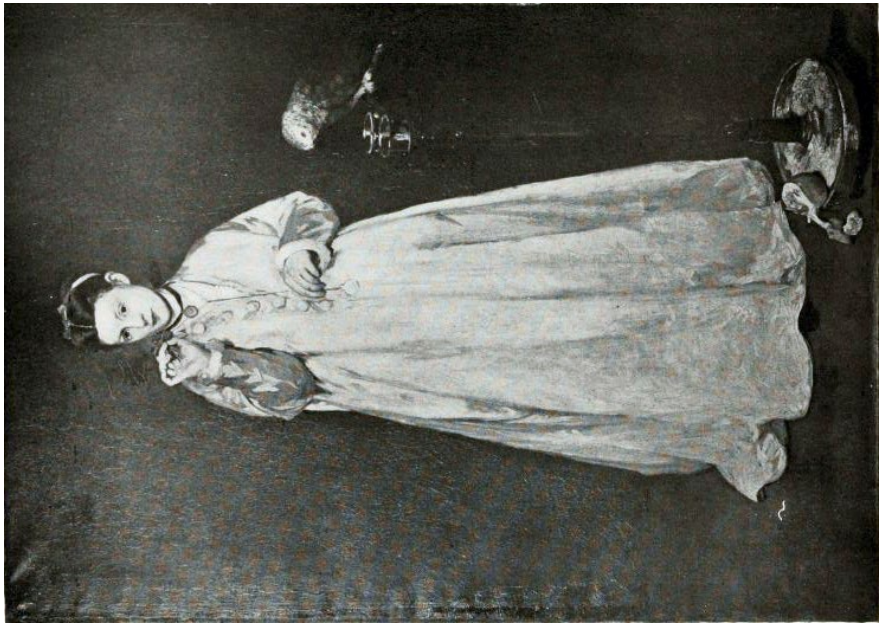
For what is the layman? He is the man who does not happen to be a specialist on the subject that is under discussion. If the subject is the buying and selling of silks, then the artist is among the laymen; but if painting, then, the buyer and seller of silks. Now, since the latter, if he is to be a good buyer and seller of silk, must find his occupation very absorbing — so much so, perhaps, as to make other things seem of secondary importance — can we not understand how the painter may become absorbed, even exclusively, in the rendering of light and atmosphere, and in the power of discriminating with most delicate assurance between different values? It is the thing he can do better than a great many others; it therefore exercises the keenest activity of his brain, and fills him with that stimulating joy which a man gets in doing what he knows he can do well. He may even not trouble himself about the effect his work will have upon other people;

but if so, he differs from the buyer and seller of silk, who has to be concerned with the effect that his commodity will produce, when it is made up into a dress and worn by a lady at some social function. The able merchant is skilled in the values of silk and gives value to his public. It may be the better for the artist and for his public, if he can do the same.

Once more, then, I ask you to look at a picture through the eyes of the artist who painted it. In no other way can you be interested in this *Girl with a Parrot* by Manet. I might have selected for illustration that other picture by him in the Metropolitan Museum, *The Boy with a Sword*, one of his best works, in which he came nearest to the power of his master, Velasquez. But, besides being beautifully painted, it has a winsome charm of subject, which is not usual with Manet, so that the selection would have given a wrong impression of his work. The latter, as a rule, is quite uninteresting in subject, not infrequently downright unpleasant; what we must expect to find in it ordinarily is only the technical charm, the refined taste displayed in the color-scheme, and the subtle skill with which light and values, atmosphere and textures, are depicted.

The light in this picture is dull, uniform, and pervasive. The photograph has falsified the effect by making the background appear dark. In the original it is a drabbish gray, a slightly yellower gray than the dove-gray on the wings of the parrot, whose head, on the contrary, is a whitish gray. Again, the glass of water at the top of the stand is gray, but a much lower tone in the darker parts, and a much more sharply whitish tone in the high lights; while, still again, the pan on the floor is of dull pewter, a lighter gray than that of the wall and less light than the parrot's head. So far, you observe, the artist has played upon grays. As a musician might explain it, he has given several modulations of the chord of gray, including the major and minor, the augmented and diminished. In other words, he has made a color-harmony of slightly differing tones of gray; taking pleasure in observing and rendering those slight distinctions, and also in noting how differently the light is reflected from the different surfaces — in a sort of dull and smothered way from the plaster on the wall; deep and lustrous from the bird's wing; more softly broken up from the feathers on the head; sharp and pellucid from the glass, and with





Top: The Old Scribe, Josef Israels
Bottom: Girl with a Parrot, Edouard Manet

duller luster from the pan. The result is, that by careful discrimination between the various actions of light, he has given us a real appreciation of the textures of the different objects — a refinement of realism in the way of painting that is far beyond the realism of Courbet.

The color of the gown is that of faded rose-leaves; that is to say, very pale rose in the shadows, a pale straw-color where it catches the light. The modeling has been obtained by varying these two tones, according to the amount of light contained in the various parts of the silk; the only approach to shadows being some dove-gray tones, where you see the dark spots round the edge of the right arm, and under the hand and cuff of the left. Notwithstanding that the artist limited himself to these few tones, and chose a gown which hangs from the shoulders with very few folds, he has made us realize the balloon-like roundness of the garment, and, moreover, the existence of a figure underneath it. Again the expression, faded rose-leaves, describes the prevailing hue of the face and hands; the latter are practically of the same color as the gown; yet we shall have no doubt, especially in the original, that the texture of the one is silk, of the others flesh, because of the method of the brushwork. Upon the dress it was laid on in sweeps; upon the fleshparts, in circular strokes and dabs.

So far, then, as we have examined the color-scheme of the picture, it is a harmony of faded rose-leaves and gray; but to prevent it from being tame, to make it resonant and vibrant, certain notes of positive color were introduced; for example, the black velvet band round the neck, a crimson tail to the bird, and the yellow rind of the orange. I may add that this clear note of yellow receives a dull echo in the drabbish-yellow sand, mingles with the rich brown of the wooden pedestal, and reappears more noticeably in the lighter brown of the girl's hair.

By this time I hope we have entered sufficiently into the point of view of Manet, when he painted this picture, to discover that the problem, as it presented itself to him, was not one of a girl or a parrot, but purely a painter-problem — to render by means of paint the real appearance of objects as revealed by light. By limiting the range of his palette, he increased the difficulty of the problem and thereby his own joy in solving it; and, moreover, produced a very delicate harmony of

color, which to a sensitive eye gives somewhat the kind of pleasure that the ear receives from a delicate harmony of sound.

We are now in a position to understand the value of Manet's contribution to modern painting. Guided by the example of Velasquez, he once more introduced real light into pictures; sometimes bright light, sometimes, as in this example, subdued light, but light as it illumines space and is contained on the different surfaces of objects. To reenumerate: he rediscovered the natural truth, that objects in light appear flatter than they do when placed in a dark studio, with light shot down on them from only one direction; that in the light there are scarcely any shadows, and that modeling, therefore, is not to be obtained by lights and shadows, but by careful rendering of the planes of more and less light; and that by means of this careful study of values, the textures also of objects could be best expressed. Lastly, he rediscovered the subtleties of nature's color-harmonies as revealed by light.

These principles and practices were almost simultaneously adopted by other painters, among whom Whistler was one, and are now generally accepted, so that modern art is distinguished by a great number of men who are clever in the technic of the brush. It is not difficult to understand what a fascination it must be to a painter to be able to reach such subtlety of observation and rendering; nor that, in the early days of the movement especially, when few attained to it, those few should be disposed to feel that it was all that a painter need strive for. "Art for Art's sake," however, will never satisfy those who have something to say, something within themselves that they must express; and such a one was Israels.

He was born in Groningen, and at first destined for a rabbi. But, after leaving school, he entered the small banking business of his father, and often went to the big bank of the Mesdags to deposit money. The rich banker's son, H. W. Mesdag, became the famous painter of the sea; the poor banker's son, the greatest all-round painter in Holland, foremost in restoring modern Dutch art to the high position it had occupied in the seventeenth century. For during the subsequent century, and until the middle of the nineteenth, Dutch artists had forsaken the nature-study of their own land and people, and had gone after the Italian grand style, turning out

historical pictures or classic landscapes, cold, inanimate, and conventional.

It was in the hard, dry, unatmospheric, academical manner that Israels learned to paint; first at Amsterdam and later at Paris, where he worked under a pupil of David's and then entered the studio of Delaroche, just as Millet was leaving it in despair. For, like the latter, Israels, the "Dutch Millet," as he is often called, was shy and awkward, and he, too, starved in Paris. Then he returned to Amsterdam, took a room, and tried to paint as Delaroche had taught him; such pictures as *Prince Maurice of Nassau Beside the Body of his Father* being the first he sent to exhibitions.

But the circumstance of a severe illness changed the current of his life. To recover his health he went to the little village of Zandvoort, near Haarlem; and there lodged with a ship's carpenter. Buried away among the sand-dunes, far from the pretenses and contentions of the studios, with sea and sky stretching away into the distance and simple fisherfolk around him, he began to see with his own eyes and to feed his imagination upon the realities. As Millet at Barbizon, so he at Zandvoort began to discover artistic material for his brush in the big-framed men and women, uncouth from the daily repetition of hard toil; to enter with sympathy into their lives of patient endurance; and to include in his study of humanity what was so intimately associated with it, the sea and sky and land and the interiors of the homes.

He could not at once shake off the effects of academic training, and his early peasant pictures still betray a design to make the spectator smile or weep by telling a pretty, moving story, assisted by little accidents of gesture or facial expression. Gradually, however, his work became broader and bigger, dealing, as Millet's did, with the essentials; for the expression of sentiment he relied more and more upon the emotional suggestion of color, light, and atmosphere. Living in Amsterdam, he learned from Rembrandt the spiritual significance of light; and, like Manet, he learned to paint with light. While he has painted landscapes and marines, his most characteristic pictures represent dim interiors, with the light entering from a small window, stealing throughout the room, and subtly detaching certain objects into faint relief.

Such a one is *The Old Scribe*. The light is concentrated on the pallid face, the white beard, and the scroll; these being the main features of the subject; the soul, as it were, of the fact. Less prominently it touches the accessory features: a bunch of pens, the ink-pot, a glass water-pitcher, and — a pair of crutches. Lame, therefore shut off from active life; pallid, because cribbed in a little attic — the brightness of the outer world only a means to an end of his close life-work — "Work, while it is yet day," for at night the tired eyes cannot work. High forehead, as of a man of intellect; mobile mouth expressive of deep emotions; intellect and emotions narrowed down to the endless transcribing of texts. The head of a dreamer — the hands big like those of a laborer, yet full of sensitiveness; note how the left is spread upon the parchment, not only keeping it down, but corresponding also in feeling to the delicate and tender expression of the other one. This hand, yes, even the movement of the pen which it guides — how they correspond with the expression of the face! Then the rude, rough-hewn manner of the drawing, joined to the subtle delicacy of the silvery light — this latter more apparent in the original than in the reproduction — what a suggestion they yield of the "simple annals of the poor," the unflinching, patient facing of the necessities and realities; the grayness of the existence and the heroism!

But it is neither the gray, monotonous life nor the tragedy of the poor that Israels always depicts. He has represented also the hardy vigor of the fishermen at work; the coyness of young lovers, as in *The Bashful Suitor* of the Metropolitan Museum; the tenderness of motherhood, and the gladsomeness of little children. It is in this wider range of sympathy that he is bigger than Millet; and, as a painter, using the resources of light and atmosphere, he excels him; so also in his renderings of the ocean and in his freer use of landscape. It was one of the regrets of Millet, at the end of his life, that he had not made as much of landscape as he might have done.

Under the influence of Israels and the Barbizon artists, the Dutch have learned once more to find the inspiration for their painting in their own country and among their own people. Guided by the teaching of Manet and the other "luminarists," they have found a new motive in the study of local nature. Nowhere are such soft and tender effects of atmosphere, such a freshness of moist and vivid coloring as

in Holland; and between these two extremes of mistiness and freshness her modern painters have produced a range of art that is characterized by dignified simplicity and by the charm of profound intimacy and heartfelt tenderness.

CHAPTER 27
Pierre Puvis De Chavannes / Jean Leon Gerome

1824 – 1904
Semi-Classical School

1824 – 1904
French Mural Painter of France

Puvis was a lover of Virgil; Gerome, very partial to subjects derived from ancient Rome. Yet, despite their classical tendencies, no two men could have been more different in their motives and methods; so that a comparison of the two will help to bring out very sharply the characteristics of each. Let us approach them first of all through the examples here illustrated.

Gerome's reproduces that moment in the gladiatorial sports of the Colosseum when one of the combatants has been defeated and the victor looks toward the galleries. The vestal virgins turn down their thumbs; if the emperor follows suit, woe to the vanquished! Both the title and the manner of representation record very clearly a precise incident of actual fact. But in Puvis's neither title nor treatment has a definite reference to facts; the painting is concerned with an idea, namely, the relation of the arts to nature. Its subject is an ideal one; its rendering idealized.

Let us examine the two more closely. Gerome's picture represents only the fragment of a scene. We might not have noticed this, since there is enough included to explain and complete the meaning of the incident, were we not comparing it with the Puvis. But the composition of the latter is complete and sufficing, and it does not occur to us to imagine anything outside the limits of the canvas. The reason is that the parts are so beautifully balanced as to create a feeling of perfect harmoniousness in the whole; every figure is placed with a scientific precision just where it needs must be in order to secure this effect of poise, and with an equal precision the various features of the near and distant landscape have been adjusted to the figures. The whole is an arrangement of full and empty spaces, regulated by the severest

logic of cause and effect.

Again we notice that the total result in Puvis's canvas is one of exquisite placidity, while that of the other is assertiveness and turmoil. It is not sufficient explanation of the difference to say that the two subjects are essentially different; or to add that Gerome had a preference for subjects of dramatic intensity, and that the work of Puvis is always marked by calm. Let us discover the deeper reason of the difference. It lies in the way in which each of the two artists, respectively, has approached his subject.

If we examine the faces of the spectators in the Colosseum, we shall find that each is strongly individualized with its particular character of strong emotion; but the faces in the other picture seem like those of persons moving in a dream. An even stronger note of contrast is represented by the two men, in Puvis's painting, who are moving a large stone. Here is an operation demanding exertion; yet, if we compare the amount of muscular force which they are exerting even with that displayed in the arms of the vestal virgins, not to mention the action of the gladiator, we are inclined to think it will take them a long time to place that stone finally. Their movements are such as the circumstances demand, but so controlled that the operation will be prolonged until the color fades from the canvas. And neither they nor the other figures grouped near them can be thought of as having to go home presently to supper; as the full-fed people in Gerome's picture, we feel sure, will do as soon as the butchery is despatched. His scene is *momentary*, *incidental*; that of Puvis's *permanent* and *elemental*. We feel, in fact, that the Puvis figures have not been brought here, but that they belong here; that they belong to the landscape, as the landscape does to them; that while the one endures, the other will. Moreover, just as the winding river, though it is really a scene near Rouen, is typical of all such river scenes, and as the apple-trees, though they differ, all represent a certain type of tree, so the figures are typical. Some are nude, others in classic draperies, still others — the group of the three women on the left, for example, and that opposite one of the architect, sculptor, and painter — in costumes reasonably modern; yet by this unusual mixture no feeling of incongruity is aroused. They all seem to be of the same race, mingling quite naturally; a race by itself, not belonging to any

particular time or place; a race resembling our own, yet not to be found anywhere on earth. To repeat: it is the *elemental* and the *permanent* that Puvis sought to express; the *incidental* and the *momentary* that occupied the attention of Gerome.

By this time it is fitting to mention, what you have probably perceived already, that while the *Pollice Verso* is an easel-picture, intended to be studied in detail, Puvis's is a mural decoration, designed for the embellishment of a certain architectural space in the Rouen Museum. I did not mention this at first, because you might then have assumed that the contrasts we have noted resulted from this difference in the intention of the two paintings. But it is not so. If Gerome had been commissioned to make a decoration based upon the Puvis subject, he would not have conceived or carried it out in the same way as Puvis has done. In the Pantheon at Paris several great painters have contributed so-called decorations; yet, compared with the decorations of Puvis in the same building, that really decorate it, their paintings are huge illustrations. And so, we may be sure from the character of his work, would a decoration by Gerome have been. But mural decoration is a thing apart from other painting.

Just what the proper characteristics of mural painting are, and what they are not, may be learned by a visit to the Boston Public Library. The walls of the staircase hall have been decorated by Puvis de Chavannes; the frieze of the delivery-room by Edwin A. Abbey; and four spaces in an upper hall by John S. Sargent. Now it is very likely that one who visits the Library for the first time, if he is not a student of mural decoration, will glance at the Puvis panels with a mild sort of interest, but will not find his attention forcibly arrested or detained. He knows, perhaps, that they represent in allegorical fashion the contributions made to civilization by *Philosophy, Astronomy, History, Chemistry, Physics*, and by *Pastoral, Dramatic, and Epic Poetry*, while the large space contains a representation of the *Nine Muses Rising front the Earth to greet Genius*. But the general effect seems unassertive, the symbolism a little vague, the figures unsubstantial, and the coloring thin and tame.

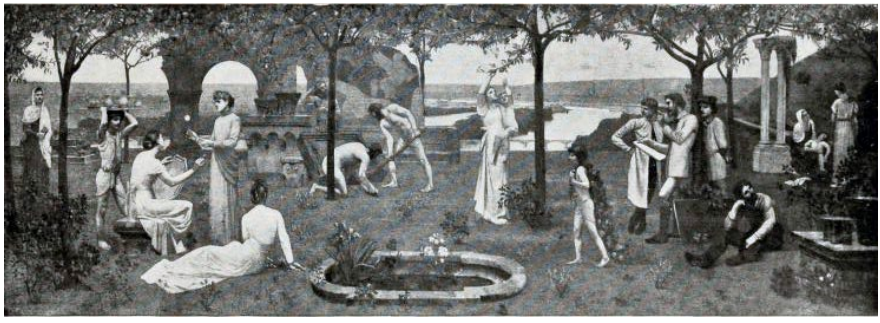
So, passing on, the visitor enters Abbey's room. Ah! knights in armor; beautiful women; strange old interiors of church and castle; a fight of six against one; a weird scene of a sick man upon his couch,

and filing past him a procession of men and women carrying curious objects; a boat rocking on the waves; a flower-eyed maiden whom a youth appears to be forsaking — these and much more flash forth from the wall in strong and brilliant colors and prick the visitor's interest. What are they all about? Good fortune! Here is a printed description of the various scenes! It appears they are taken from one of the oldest legends of our race, the Quest of the Holy Grail. Here is fodder a-plenty for the mind! Eagerly the visitor reads the printed matter and identifies the various scenes, and has his views of how they do or do not correspond with his understanding of the story.

As he leaves this room and passes again through the hall, I wonder whether he spares a moment for another glance at the Puvis panels; and, if so, whether he notes how reposeful they seem after the various excitements of the Abbey series. Perhaps not — yet. He mounts the stairs to the Sargent room, so that his eyes are raised and catch sight first of a panel in the center of which kneels a huddled mass of men and women, bowed in prayer or lifting up their hands in supplication. Over them stand in threatening attitudes the figures of an Egyptian and an Assyrian king, and round about the group are flashes of crimson wings, the Egyptian sphinx, the goddess Pasht with black and gold pinions, a bird-headed god, a lion, and other objects.

A second time: "What is it all about?" a question fortunately answered by the printed explanation. The latter is invaluable, especially when the visitor proceeds to examine the bewildering labyrinth of symbolic forms, taken from Egyptian mythology, which fill the ceiling space. How tired his neck becomes, and possibly his brain, by the alternate reference to the book and to the ceiling! He experiences quite a relief when his eyes come down to a lower level and are greeted by a row of stately figures, prophets of the Old Testament, as he sees by the name written under each. How pleasant to be able to enjoy them without laborious study of a printed page! Very likely the visitor is already familiar with them, for their photographs have appeared in great numbers throughout the country. The popular taste, not always right in such matters, has justly singled them out as the best feature of Sargent's earlier decoration. For there is a later one; as the visitor turns, it greets him from the other end of the hall. Here again is a row of figures, this time of archangels; but most





Top: Pollice Verso, Gerome
Bottom: Inter Artes Et Naturum, Puvis De Chavannes

noticeable is the treatment of the upper part, where figures, symbolizing the Persons of the Trinity, sit enthroned. Their forms are enveloped in ample draperies, flatly painted with little or no modeling, large expanses of rich dusky coloring, against which the heads and hands, some ornamented borders, and forms of doves, make spots of animation. But the general impression is of flatness and simplicity, forming a background of subdued grandeur to the central group of the Crucifixion. Flatness of painting and simple ample masses — these qualities Sargent borrowed from the Byzantine artists who decorated with paintings and mosaics the walls of churches in the Middle Ages. They were poor draftsmen, unskilled also, as we have noticed earlier, in the actual craft of painting; yet their designs were so impressive in their large simplicity, that to this day their work, from

the standpoint of decoration, wins the admiration of artists.

Flatness of painting, simple ample masses, large simplicity of design — as the visitor descends the great staircase, will he notice, I wonder, that these are characteristics also of the Puvis panels; that what contributed so much to the grandeur of Sargent's latest work is in a technical sense the fundamental quality of Puvis's? Perhaps it was because of their flatness, their lack of elaborate modeling, the large simplicity, or, if you will, the comparative emptiness — of their design, that he had paid little heed to them before. Now, if he has the curiosity to look into the Abbey room, he will observe in the latter's paintings the very opposite qualities — elaborate modeling, exuberance of parts in the design, a general contradiction of orderly quiet. Then possibly, since he is no longer curious about their subjects, nor dividing his observation between them and the printed key, but looking at them solely as decorations, he may miss something of the suave, stately calm that distinguishes the work of Puvis.

The fact is that Abbey is an illustrator on a grand scale; Puvis, on a grander scale, a decorator. Abbey's work is grand because he has taken one of the noblest themes in literature, and with much archaeological knowledge, and upon large canvases, has represented the story with considerable dramatic and poetic feeling. Puvis's, on the other hand, is grander because his work joins hands with what is bigger and grander than itself — namely, the architecture — and by union with it has been lifted up.

This is the point to which we have been slowly traveling: Puvis had what neither of the other painters possesses, at least to anything like the same extent — the true instinct of the decorator. This instinct reasons the matter out in the following way The part must be less than the whole; therefore the painted panel cannot compete with the total effect of the architecture, of which it is only a detail; to try to make it stand out conspicuously is to excite an invidious comparison, whereas to make it blend harmoniously with the architecture is to secure from the latter a reinforcement of the painting. Moreover, the space to be decorated, except in the case of a curved ceiling, is a flat solid mass, which terminates the vision; therefore, while the decoration is introduced as a pleasing variety to the general effect of masonry, it should not interfere with the intentions of the latter; it

should not, as the artists express it, "make a hole in the wall"; give, that is to say, an impression that you are looking through the wall at some scene beyond, but should preserve the essential condition of the wall: its solidity and flatness. Once more, since the painting is to decorate a certain wall space, its composition of lines and masses should be chosen with particular reference to the shape of the space; some of the lines, for example, should repeat, while others should be in contrast to, the contours of the space, and the masses should be arranged so as to present a perfect balance within the space. Moreover, the lines of a building are generally simple, the wall spaces spots of quiet strength; therefore the composition of the painting will do well to imitate this simplicity of line and quietness of masses, so as to give the idea of structural arrangement; to be what artists call "architectonic" in character.

To sum up, the decorator should recognize that his work is subordinate to the architecture; should make it harmonize with the latter in composition and color, preserve the flatness of the wall space, and have a distinctly structural or architectonic character. Let us examine how Puvis, to whom is due the credit of having revived in the nineteenth century the true principles of mural painting, exemplified them in his work. It should be mentioned, in passing, that, unlike the Boston Library, some of the buildings in which his work appears are inferior specimens of architecture, but that did not deter him from sticking to the theory of subordination.

We will consider his work under the two heads of his choice of subject and method of painting. Puvis de Chavannes came of an aristocratic family which had resided for three hundred years in Burgundy, so that, as a French writer says, he inherited the racial tendency toward poetry and the enjoyment of nature. On the other hand, his father was an engineer of bridges and roads in Lyons, and the son, after receiving a classical and mathematical education in that city, proceeded to the Polytechnic in Paris, with a view to adopting his father's profession. But, his health breaking down, he made a trip to Italy and came back determined to be a painter. He started, then, with an acquired taste both for the classics and for mathematics, with logical as well as poetical tendencies. It was not until he was thirty-five years of age that the accident of some vacant panels

in a new house, belonging to his brother, drew his attention to mural decoration. Of one of the drawings he made an enlarged copy and sent it to the Salon. Its acceptance encouraged him to go on in the same vein, and two years later he exhibited the decorative canvases, *War* and *Peace*. One of them was purchased by the government; when Puvis, not willing that the two should be separated, made a present of the other. They are now in the museum at Amiens, and mark the beginning of his public career as a mural painter.

The conception of their subjects is the reverse of realistic. In the *Peace*, for example, many of the figures are nude; they are grouped with the regard for beauty of line that distinguishes the work of the classicists, but, unlike them, Puvis already shows his love of landscape. Yet in three important respects this work differs from his later ones. In the first place, the figures are massed one behind the other; secondly, their forms are ample and roundly modeled; and, thirdly, the eye is detained by the beauty or character of individual figures. As the French say, there are fine *morceaux* in the painting, and it was applauded by the authorities.

But Puvis's logical mind argued, not immediately but by degrees, that anything which distracts attention from the whole must be avoided; that the massing of figures, necessitating contrasts of light and shade, interfered with the flatness of the design; that in every way perfection was to be reached through simplification. Accordingly he reconsidered even the character of his subjects. The allegory must be rendered in a manner as abstract as possible, so that the mind of the spectator may be in no wise occupied with "What is it all about?" nor drawn away for a moment from the first and final thought that this is a decoration.

The conception having been reduced to abstract expression, it followed that the method of painting, also, must be as unobtrusive as possible. Therefore Puvis reduced the amount of modeling; relied more and more upon the contour-lines of his figures and their position in the composition; distributed them in successive planes, sprinkled over the landscape, and flattened the bulk and distance of the latter into a simple patterning of colored forms; reducing also the strength of the color, heightening continually the key of it, and relying more and more upon subtle rendering of values. His progress

became a constant search for what was essential, and a leaving out of everything that might possibly distract attention from the whole and disturb the absolute simplicity of effect which it was his growing purpose to attain.

It was charged against him that this increasing tendency to leave out rather than to put in resulted in large barren spaces and in carelessness of drawing; and that his color, becoming paler and paler, was anemic. No doubt there is some justification for the criticism; indeed the panels at Boston show instances of imperfect drawing. But there never was a prophet yet crying in the wilderness that did not fall into exaggerations; it is by them that he compels a hearing; and Puvis, by his attack upon the kind of historic fiction that was being made to do duty as decoration, perhaps had need to run into extremes. As to his color, he proved himself a modern of the moderns. Not even Manet himself could juxtapose his flat tones with more precise discrimination of their relative values. Puvis's skill in this respect is manifested particularly in the landscape parts. He selects for the sky a tone of blue that has more light in it than the greens of the earth, and varies the tones of the latter by almost imperceptible gradations of light and less light tones. In this management of values and knowledge of forms and construction, he is the equal of the best professional landscape-painters; and the result is that, while his landscapes give an impression of space and seem filled with air that surrounds the figures, they also give the impression of being flat to the wall.

The truth of this is apparent, I think, even in the reproduction of *Inter Artes et Naturam*, though we miss the effect of the color. But try to imagine the color of the grass to be tender green, such as in early April, sprinkled with pale-yellow flowers, while a bunch of purple iris grows beside the water-basin; that the costumes of the women include pale rose and lilac and silvery white; those of the men, gray and blue; that the distant landscape is veiled in luminous bluish haze, and the whole scene bathed in a soft glow. In this landscape, whose tranquility is not marred by a single flutter of disturbance — an abstract expression of nature's calm — the figures move and have their being, abstracts of humanity, suggesting by their positions and gestures the abstract ideals of the artist. In the original they are not as prominent as in the black-and-white reproduction, the colors

tending to blend them with the landscape, so that the spectator is less inclined to examine them separately. They dwell apart from him, creatures of his own likeness, but purged of materialism; embodied spirits, in a scene that is of the earth, but not earthly, breathing the spirit of nature as she reveals herself in moments of exalted calm to the contemplation of the painter and the poet.

And poet by instinct, as well as painter, was Puvis himself; moreover, a vigorous, red-blooded man, with healthy enjoyment in the good things of life, and an admiration of what is strong and bounteous in human and physical nature. Yet in his art the instinct of the decorator, as we have seen, led him to avoid these qualities, as being too assertive for the province of mural decoration, until by a process of severely logical experiments he was able to depict not form, but its essence and abstract suggestion. The result is that his decorations do not impress upon us the idea of paint; they seem rather to have grown upon the wall like a delicate efflorescence.

In the case of Gerome's pictures, however, one does not lose the recollection of paint. Throughout it is the cleverness of drawing and skill of representation that divide our attention with the subject. He belonged to the family of the classicists, was learned in composition and drawing as they are taught in the schools, and fond of classical and drapery subjects. But he also borrowed of the realists and gave his men and women something of individual character; he borrowed also of the romantic and anecdotic painters, so that his pictures tell exciting stories; moreover, he had traveled in Egypt and brought back a certain feeling for glowing light and color. In consequence, therefore, of his touching so many varieties of popular taste, he was a most popular painter and received every honor that the French nation bestows upon success. But, being so accomplished in many directions, he was really master in none, and the artistic judgment of the world has already turned its thumb down upon his excessive reputation.

CHAPTER 28

James Abbott McNeill Whistler / John Singer Sargent

1834 – 1903 American

1856 – 1925 American

These pictures, like their respective authors, present a strange contrast. The Sargent, so brilliantly assertive, is the work of a reticent personality; while the Whistler, so tenderly reticent, is the creation of an artist who was brilliant and assertive.

There is an antithesis in these two cases between the man and his work that is by no means uncommon in the history of art. Without attempting an explanation of this, we may note, as helping toward it, that an artist puts into his work what there is of best and strongest in himself; also that some artists, holding their art very sacred, erect around it a barricade, and adopt a personal manner that, as it were, shall throw the world off the scent; somewhat as the plover wheels around in the air with noisy cry, in order to distract attention from her nest, which is tucked away remote from disturbance in a different direction.

The work of both these men has an original force, that has influenced countless other painters, and yet its inspiration was borrowed. Both owe much to the lesson of Velasquez; Sargent also to that of Franz Hals and Raeburn, while Whistler gleaned from Manet and the Japanese. The originality of each consists in adapting what he has derived to the spirit of his own age and surroundings, and in giving his own work an independent vitality, that has become, as I have said, an example to others.

This statement may serve as a useful definition of originality. The latter is rarely, if ever, doing something new, but giving to a thing that has been done before some new force and meaning. Now that we are reaching the end of our survey of painting, we may look back and see that the progress has been for the most part a series of renewals, of men carrying forward and farther what they had received

from others. The most notable example of this in the whole story is that of Raphael, who has been called "the Prince of Plagiarists," and yet his work is unique. It is not the search after or discovery of new ideas that makes an original man, so much as his ability to reclothe the old with some newness of appearance or meaning out of his own stock of individuality.

When Sargent entered the school of Carolus-Duran he was much above the average of pupils in attainment. He had been born in Florence, in 1856, the son of cultivated parents; his father, a Massachusetts gentleman, having practised medicine in Philadelphia and retired. The home life was penetrated with refinement, and outside of it were the beautiful influences of Florence, combining the charms of sky and hills with the wonders of art in the galleries and the opportunities of intellectual and artistic society. Accordingly, when Sargent arrived in Paris, he was not only a skilful draftsman and painter, the result of his study of the Italian masters, but also — which has had perhaps an even greater influence upon his career — young as he was, he already had a refined and cultivated taste. This at once stood him in good stead, for his new master, though a very skilful painter and excellent teacher, was otherwise a man of rather showy and superficial qualities. He too had studied in Italy, but later in Spain, and it was chiefly upon the lessons learned from Velasquez that he had founded his own brilliant method. This method Sargent, being a youth of remarkable diligence with an unusual faculty for receiving impressions, soon absorbed. He painted a portrait of his master, which proved he had already acquired all that the latter could give him. Then he went to Madrid and saw the work of Velasquez with his own eyes; subsequently visiting Holland, where he was greatly impressed with the portraits by Franz Hals. Let us see how these various influences are reflected in his work.

In the accompanying picture we may trace the influence of Velasquez in the noble simplicity of the lines, in the ample dignity of the masses, in the single impression which the whole composition makes and the quiet sumptuousness obtained by the treatment of the black and white costumes, a treatment at once grand and subtle. Moreover, the whole picture has the highbred feeling and stateliness of manner, the powerful directness and at the same time self-

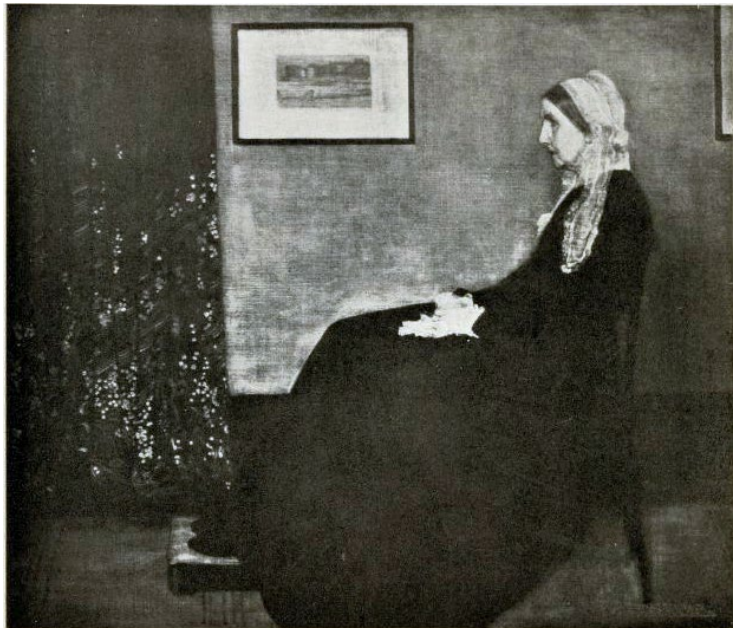
restraint, that Sargent had found in the old Italian portraits. Yet the suggestion of the picture is thoroughly modern; not only do the ladies belong to to-day and vibrate with life, but in the actual technic of the painting there is vitality of brushwork: now a long sweep of a full brush, now a spot of accent, a touch-and-go method, brilliantly suggestive, terse, quick, vivacious, and to the point, qualities that are best summed up in the French word *esprit*. They are peculiarly French; and in his possession of them Sargent shows the influence of his training and life in Paris, and proves himself a modern of the moderns.

Yet in his case this *esprit* is rarely carried to excess; and when it may seem to be, as in some of his portraits of ladies, one may guess that he took refuge in this pyrotechnic display of brushwork because he could find nothing else in the picture to interest him. Usually, he seems to have received an almost instantaneous impression of his subject, vivid and distinct, to the setting down of which are directed all his subsequent efforts; and they are often long and patiently repeated. It is not a deep impression; as a rule, takes little account of the inward man or woman, but represents with amazing reality the visible exterior, illumined by such hints of character as a keen observer may discover in manner or speech and general appearance. Sometimes, however, it would appear that he had been unable to establish a sympathetic accord with his subject; and these are the few occasions when he seems mainly preoccupied with the technic, or the still fewer ones in which there are evidences of tiredness or fumbling in the brushwork.

In the acquirement of the latter a strong influence was Franz Hals. From him Sargent caught the skill of modeling the faces in quiet, even light, of building them up by placing side by side firm, strong patches of color, each of which contains the exact amount of light the part of the face reflected, and of giving to flat masses of color the suggestion of roundness and modeling. While French *esprit* is noticeable in his portraits of ladies, his male ones recall rather the manly gusto of the old Dutch painter. Moreover, in his placing of the figures in the composition, and in the pure, luminous tones of his flesh-tints, he often reminds one of the Scotch artist, Raeburn.

In addition to portraits, he has executed some mural decorations





Top: Portrait of the Missus Hunter, John S. Sargent
Bottom: Portrait of the Artist's Mother, James A. McNeil Whistler

for the Boston Public Library, the theme of which is the *Triumph of Religion* — illustrating certain stages of Jewish and Christian history. One portion presents in an intentionally complicated composition the confusion of gods and goddesses of Egypt; another, also with deliberate intricacy of arrangement, the persecution of the Jews under Egyptian and Assyrian tyrants. Then in the frieze below stand the *Prophets* of the Old Testament, those of *Hope* and those of *Lamentation*; large and simple forms, following one another in beautiful, simple lines of rhythmic gravity. Upon the wall at the opposite end of the room appears a symbolic representation of the *Redemption of Man*, treated in the spirit of Byzantine decoration, but without the Byzantine formalism and unnaturalness in the representation of the figures. This panel, the latest executed, is the best, being a remarkable example of grafting the skill of modern painting upon the old stock of Byzantine mural decoration, which still remains, by reason of its flatness of treatment, its general simplicity of design and occasional elaboration of parts, the most distinctly mural form of color decoration that has eyer been applied to a wall. The *Prophets* share this simplicity of design, but the other two panels, partly because of the confusion of their design — although there is no reason why a pattern should not be elaborate and intricate — still more because of the immense amount of literary allusion that they contain, and without a knowledge of which they are unintelligible, may be reckoned the least successful.[24]

These decorations exhibit a very beautiful side of Sargent's mind that has been only partially developed; a deeper insight into the significance of the subject than his portraits suggest. The latter are distinguished rather by an audacious vivacity of method, and an extraordinary appreciation of the value of the things which lie upon, or only a little below, the surface. In this respect he offers a great contrast to Whistler.

If you turn to the latter's *Portrait of the Artists Mother*, you will recognize at once that "audacious" and "vivacity" are terms that cannot be applied to it; also, that the interest it arouses is a much deeper

[24] For the point of this criticism the reader may compare the chapter on Puvis de Chavannes.

one than you feel in Sargent's picture. For Whistler, not a brilliant brushman, was interested most in what could not be presented to actual sight, but suggested only. Here it is the tenderness and dignity of motherhood and the reverence that one feels for it; not the first blossoming of motherhood, as in Raphael's Madonnas, but the ripened form of it. What the man himself is conscious of owing to it and feeling for it, what the mother herself may feel, as she looks back with traveling gaze along the path of hopes and fears, of joy and pain, that she has trodden. This miracle of Motherhood, most holy and pure and lovely of all the many miracles of life, continually repeated in millions of experiences, Whistler has represented once for all in such a way that this picture will remain forever a type of it.

By what means did he produce this universal, typal significance? Ultimately, of course, by the way in which he has composed and painted the picture; but, before that, through the attitude of mind with which he approached the task. If we succeed in understanding this attitude, we shall have learned a clue to all this artist's work.

You remember that Leonardo cared less for the appearance of things than for the spirit or essential meaning that was concealed behind the veil of the outward appearance. He was in this respect the opposite of Dürer, just as Whistler was of Sargent. He shunned the obvious, however brilliantly portrayed. Now the least obvious of the arts is music. Music steals into the soul of a man and fills it with impressions; into the soul of another man with impressions, varying according to his experience and feeling; and so on into the souls of countless others, with always varying impressions. Moreover, the impression received by each individual is not a definite one, or limited except by the individual's capacity. The impression grows and grows until it loses itself in a distance that we can seek toward but never reach; it passes into the universal.

Why has not painting the power to affect us so indefinitely? Because it must begin by representing concrete things: figures and objects that we can see and touch, and to which we have given names. Therefore much of our attention is distracted by voluntarily or involuntarily identifying these things which have names, so that the general impression, the essence of the artist's conception, of which these names are unavoidable accidents, is clogged and

circumscribed by them. Accordingly, if the painter desires, as Whistler did, to raise his own art toward the abstract and universal appeal of music, it must be by diverting attention as far as possible from the means that he is obliged to employ.

At one period of his career Whistler almost completely discarded form and objects, relying, as far as possible, entirely upon the effects of color to produce the impression; calling these canvases, in which different tones of one or more colors would be blended, "nocturnes," "symphonies," "harmonies": terms borrowed from the art of music, the abstract significance of which he was striving to emulate. The public, being addicted to names and to being interested in concrete things, asked, "What are they all about?" and, receiving no answer, scoffed.

But even to Whistler these canvases were only in the nature of experiments. The pictorial artist cannot get away from the concrete; visible and tangible objects must engage his attention; he must found upon them his abstract appeal. Let us see how Whistler did it, interrupting for a moment our study of his paintings by a glance at his work in etching, for all through his career he was etcher as well as painter. Among his early works with the needle is a series of views of the Thames: the row of picturesque old houses that lined the water at Chelsea, where he lived for many years, the wharves, the shipping, boat-houses, and bridges. In the suggestion they give of constructive reality, of detail, and of the actual character of the objects represented, they are marvelous. Not even a man exclusively in love with the appearances of things could render them more convincingly. Then, having mastered the character of form, he set to work to make the objects in his etchings subordinate to the general impression he wished to convey; giving more and more attention to the evanescent qualities of light and atmosphere. Having learned to put in, he became learned in leaving out; and in his later series of Venetian etchings confined himself to a few lines contrasted with large spaces of white paper. But the lines are used with such comprehension and discretion, that they are sufficient to suggest the character of the objects, while the chief meaning is given to the empty spaces. These cease to be mere paper; they convey the impression of water or sky under the diverse effects of atmosphere and luminousness, and by

their vague suggestiveness stimulate the imagination.

Remembering Whistler's preference for suggestion rather than actual statement, one can understand his fondness for etching, since the latter demands an effort of imagination, first of all upon the artist's part to translate the various hues of nature into black and white, and then upon the spectator's to retranslate these into hues of nature. And while this is so in the case of color, it is much more so when it comes to the point of creating an illusion of *atmosphere* simply by means of a few lines on a sheet of white paper. And a correspondingly keener imagination is demanded of the spectator, which may be a reason why many people prefer the master's earliest *Thames Series*.

In the *Portrait of the Artist's Mother* black and white again form important ingredients, combined with the gray of the wall and the very dark green of the curtain; the grave harmony being solely relieved by the soft warmth of the face. Is it necessary to say that this prevailing gravity, so choicely reserved, and this accent of tenderness, contribute very largely to the emotion aroused in our imagination? Reserve, if it is deliberate, is a quality of force and may be one of dignity. That it shall be so here is assured by the contrast between the upright line of the curtain and the diagonal curving line of the lady's figure, and by the quiet assertion of these two masses. Observe how the latter are painted so that they shall count as masses, with only enough suggestion of modeling to make us feel in one case the folds of the curtain and in the other the figure beneath the dress. The severity of these masses is assuaged by the two gathering-points of intimate expression, the hands and the head. The former are laid one above the other with a gesture of exquisite composure, their color rendered more delicate and tender by being shown against the white handkerchief.[25] The gray wall behind the head assists in creating an illusion of atmosphere, enveloping the head in tenderness, while the little accents of dainty suggestiveness that appear in the white cap soften the immobility of the face. In this is concentrated the calm and tender dignity to which every other part of the canvas has contributed. I speak of "calm and tender dignity," but who shall capture

[25] Compare how Rubens placed the dead body on a white cloth in his *Descent from the Cross.*

into exact words the qualities of mind and feeling which lie behind that searching gaze? That face speaks to each and every mother's son with different appeal; it speaks in a universal language, that each can understand but no man can fully comprehend. Yet, once again, let us note that the expression of the face is not an isolated incident, but the center and climax of a corresponding expression that in a more general way pervades the whole canvas; the result of the exquisite balance of the full and empty spaces and of the tender dignity of the color-scheme of black and gray.

Whistler's fondness for gray, which even caused him to keep his studio dimly lighted, just as the Dutch artist Israels does, may be traced to his study of Velasquez, as also his subtle use of black and white, and the preference he shows for sweeping lines and ample imposing masses. Often in the apparently haphazard arrangement of the masses and spaces there is a suggestion of the Japanese influence, as well as in the introduction of a hint of something outside the picture. Note, for example, the apparently accidental spotting of the picture on the wall, and the portion of another frame, peeping in, as it were, from outside. From both Velasquez and the Japanese he learned the power of simplicity and subtlety; the value of leaving out rather than of putting in; the charm of delicate harmonies, the, fascination of surprise, and the abiding joy of suggestiveness. They helped him to give expression to the preference, which he shared with Leonardo, for the elusive rather than the obvious.

Whistler and Sargent belong to America, but are claimed by foreigners as, at least, citizens of the world, cosmopolitans. Sargent, with the exception of a few months at distant intervals, has spent his life abroad; Whistler, since about his twentieth year, was a resident of Paris and London, occasionally visiting Holland. The artistic influences which affected both were those of Europe. Yet their Americanism may be detected in their extraordinary facility of absorbing impressions, in the individuality evolved by both, and in the subtlety and reserve of their methods, qualities that are characteristic of the best American art.

CHAPTER 29
Claude Monet / Hashimoto Gahō

1840 – 1926 — Impressionist School of France

1834 – 1908 — Modern School of Japan

We touched upon Oriental art at the very beginning of our story. Then it was the Byzantine offshoot of it that we were considering, and the efforts of Giotto to liberate painting from the shackles of its traditions. Now, however, it is the art of Japan that claims our attention, and it does so because, as we saw in the previous chapter, it has been a source of some fresh inspiration to Western painting. The latest phase of the latter is represented in Monet, while Gaho is the foremost living artist in Japan. They are both landscape-painters.

We have seen that Manet was the founder of the modern impressionism, yet in the minds of the public Monet stands forth as the most conspicuous impressionist; and, as his later pictures are painted not in masses of color but with an infinity of little dabs of paint, the public is apt to suppose that this method of painting is what is meant by impressionism. Now Monet, like Manet, is an impressionist, in that what he strives to render is the effect vividly produced upon the eye by a scene; and, working always out of doors, he goes further than this, in trying to represent the exact effect of a scene at a certain hour of the day. It is the fleeting, transitory mood of nature that he represents. For this reason he was one of the first to be attracted by the Japanese paintings and colored prints which began about the sixties to be brought over in considerable numbers to Paris. For one of the characteristics of the Japanese work is, that it catches the fugitive gesture or movement in the elasticity of its momentary appearance.

But the method which Monet uses to render his effects is a totally different matter from his way of seeing nature, and of itself has nothing to do with impressionism. Nor was he the originator of the method of painting in dots or dabs. The first to practise it was a

French painter but little known, named Scurat, who had studied very closely the experiments in light and color made by certain scientists, among others by Professor Rood of Columbia University, and then applied the theory to the practice of painting. Seurat was followed by Pissarro, and then by Monet, and later by many others, among them our own American painter, Childe Hassam. But, since Monet stands out from all of them as the big original man, this innovation in the handling of pigments will be identified with him.

Let us trace the train of causes which led to this result. Though a Parisian by birth, Monet's early years were spent at Havre, where Boudin, the painter of harbors and shipping, frequently resided. It was he who, attracted by the young Monet's taste for drawing, advised him to go out of doors and study nature. The young man did so, but was interrupted in his studies by being drawn as a conscript and drafted to Algeria. Here he came under the spell of the brilliant Southern sunshine. To his study of nature was added a special enthusiasm for the effects of sunlight. This was increased when he visited England during the disturbed period of the Franco-Prussian War, and became acquainted with the experiments in the painting of light that had been made by Turner. Thus, a second time, an English influence affected the course of French painting. Forty years earlier the appearance at the Salon of pictures by Constable had stimulated "the men of 1830" to go out to Barbizon and study nature; and now Turner gave the stimulus to Monet to supplement and advance the study which they had achieved. The rendering of light became the problem of his artistic endeavors. Then it was that on his return to France he became acquainted with the principles of Seurat and Pissarro, and found in them a practical means of fulfilling what was to be his particular style in art as the leader of the "luminarists."

His aim was to render the appearance of nature as seen in out-of-door light — *plein air*, as the French call it — and especially the various effects of sunlight. Aided by the experiments of the scientists and by his own keen observation, he discovered certain facts which had escaped the notice of less keen eyes unaided by science; for example, that green, seen under strong sunshine, is not green, but yellow; that the shadows cast by sunlight upon snow or upon brightly lighted surfaces are not black, but blue; and that a white dress, seen under

the shade of trees on a bright day, has violet or lilac tones. Science had proved that these are facts, and the keen, cultivated eye of the artist corroborated them. Here was a new insight into realism.

Thus far, however, science had only opened up a new faculty of seeing; could it also suggest a method of reproducing in paint the effects thus seen? Professor Rood had made experiments by covering disks with various colors, and then revolving them and noting the color produced while the disk was in motion. This suggested a new way of applying the pigments to the canvas. Instead of blending them upon the palette, the artist placed them separately side by side upon the canvas, so that the blending might be done by the eye of the spectator, standing at the required distance from the picture. As Pissarro himself said, the idea was "to substitute the optical mingling for the mingling of pigments, the decomposition of all the colors into their constituent elements; because the optical mingling excites much more intense luminosity than the mingling of pigments."

If you stand close to a picture by Monet, you see only a confusion of dabs of different-colored pigments laid on the canvas with separate strokes of the brush-point, in consequence of which this method of painting has been called the *pointilliste* method. But, if you step further back, these dabs begin to mingle, until they no longer appear separate but merged into a single harmonious effect.

Let us refer to the illustration of the *Old Church at Vernon*. It reproduces pretty well the effect of the separate dabs — the points, or stippling, as they are also called; but, unless you are familiar with some of the originals of Monet's pictures, it will hardly suggest to you the blending of these dabs. The searching eye of the camera has reduced the effect of distance and mechanically registered the multiplicity of paint spots, so that the picture looks somewhat as it would if we were standing where we ought not to stand to view it properly — namely, close by. Accordingly we receive an impression of a gritty, confused surface, and of a very wabbly, unsolid-looking church, rising up into a sky that seems veiled in crape. For here again, and in the water of the foreground, the camera has played us false. It did so, you may remember, in the drab-gray background of Manet's *Girl with a Parrot*, making it appear too dark; and here the darkness of sky and water is even more exaggerated, since in the original they are a very

delicate dove-gray.

For the hour represented is early on a summer's morning, when the vapors that have been sleeping over meadows and river are touched by the "rosy-fingered dawn" and, palpitating in the growing warmth, begin to float skyward and disperse. All the air is a-tremble with silky opalescent mist, through which trees and buildings glimmer scarcely more substantial than their reflections. You can now appreciate why the outlines of the church are rendered so uncertainly, why its mass presents so little of the solidity of architecture. The church, like everything else in the scene, appears to be trembling in the soft, quivering atmosphere. If you have witnessed such an early sunrise, and could see the original of this picture, you would not need my word to recognize the truth with which the phenomenon is represented.

We may discover here a clue to the kind of motive which interested Monet, as well as to the method he adopted to realize it. It was not the church as a specimen of architecture that for the time being interested him, but its aspect under the influence of a certain evanescent mood of nature. With the same end in view, he painted his famous series of the *West Front of Rouen Cathedral:* under varying light-effects of early morning, of full sunlight, of fog, of the last rays of the sun, of afternoon, and so on. The venerable pile is represented with sufficient hint of shape and construction to make us realize its presence, yet it is not its material reality that affects us, but something quite as real, possibly even more so: namely, the influence upon our spirit of its presence when bathed in the tenderness, or glory, or mystery of light. The pictures will not give you the actual appearance in its whole or detail of the architecture as a photographic print would do. But imagine yourself dispensing with a lens and wooden box and a sensitized plate inside it, and receiving the impression of the lighted cathedral through your eyes on to the sensitized plate of your imagination, and so securing a spiritual impression, a spirit picture. It would be somewhat like what Monet has produced in these cathedral pictures, and in a host of others, including the one we are studying.

It was indeed a higher kind of impressionism that Monet originated, one that reveals a vivid rendering, not of the natural and the concrete facts, but of their influence upon the spirit when they are

wrapped in the infinite diversities of that impalpable, immaterial, universal medium which we call light, when the concrete loses itself in the abstract, and what is of time and matter impinges on the eternal and the universal.

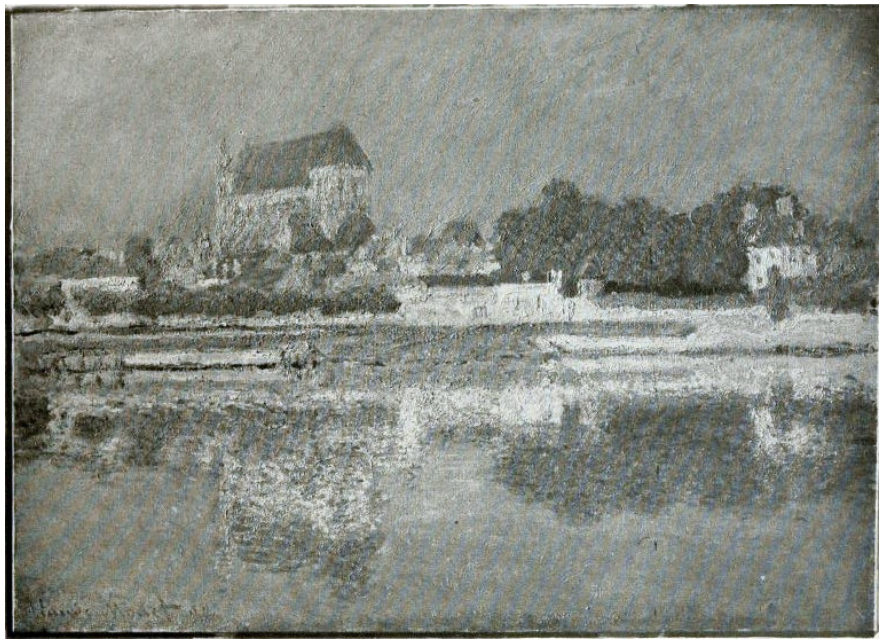
This is the secret also of the spiritual impression produced by Corot's pictures of the dawn and evening; everything trembles on the edge of those gray skies of his through which the eye travels forward, until imagination takes its place and the spirit dips into the illimitable. For Corot could make us feel that the bit of sky which he reveals to us is a part of the infinite ocean of light. But Monet's range of expression is much wider than Corot's; partly because his sensitiveness to color is keener and more embracing, partly because he has found a new way of rendering the color impressions by means of paint. For this reason he has gone farther in the representation of light than Rembrandt, Velasquez, or Turner. He does not have to stimulate the appearance of light by surrounding it with shadows as Rembrandt did; nor is he bound to the tangible, visible objects of his subject, as was Velasquez, in representing their values or the amount of light which each contained; nor, again, tempted to escape from the tangible appearances, as Turner grew to be. The secret of his freer, fuller power is that he uses a method of painting which, while it is clumsy and gross compared with the tenuous medium of light that he is representing, yet enables him to suggest a higher key of light and more nearly to suggest the essential characteristic of light, namely, its vibrative quality.

For let us remember that light is a form of energy that travels in waves through space, until it reaches us, when it floods the sky and pours over all the earth, swimming through transparent objects, turned from its direction, as it is refracted in its course through objects of varying transparency, tossed in a shimmer of luminous reflections from the surfaces of opaque objects; an energy that streams, or throbs, and darts in and out, pulsating continually with vibrations.

It is an approximation toward this suggestion of movement that the *pointilliste* method of painting permits. When we try to read from a book whose print is too small for our eyesight, the little dots of black are apt to irritate our brain, until the whole page presents an

unsteady, quavering blur, very painfully fatiguing because it oppresses us with a sense of feebleness. But suppose that, instead of dots of black, we are looking at dabs of color, which, when they blend, suggest a mass of foliage quivering with light; then the sensation is pleasant. Instead of the eye being distressed by the sense of feebleness, it has been gladdened by a surprise of new perception; and as our eye has had a share in creating the surprise, our imagination receives so much the pleasanter stimulation. We are not gazing helplessly at a blur, but likely to enjoy a sensation of vibrating color; color, that is to say, with all the stir of light about it.

The artist in another way also has made it possible for us to see more sensitively. For example, to our unaided sight a stretch of sea may appear to have a prevailing hue of blue, or, more definitely, perhaps, a greenish blue. Monet, on the other hand, with an eye that is by nature keener and trained to an exquisite sensitiveness, sees the blue and paints in blue dabs, notes the greenish blue and adds dabs of green. But he sees much more; the presence of yellow it may be, or white in the strong sunshine, and of pink and rose and violet. All these constituent colors he places side by side in minute patches, and immediately the latter begin to act and react on one another, as a number of bright people will do upon one another, when assembled together in a room. I will mention only one recognized fact: red, yellow, and blue, being regarded as the primary colors, and the combinations of any two of these — namely, red + yellow = orange, yellow + blue = green, blue + red = purple — being regarded as secondary colors, it has been demonstrated that the juxtaposition of any secondary with the remainder primary will heighten the brilliancy of each. Thus, orange and blue are mutually enforcing; so green and red, and yellow and purple. While this law applies everywhere in painting, it applies with more subtlety and vivacity when the color spaces, instead of being big, are split up into an infinite number of tiny fragments; for the result may be likened to an intricate web, scintillating with numberless dewdrops. And there is yet another source of vivacity in this method of painting; namely, that the light is not reflected in broad masses from the canvas, but from each one of these separate patches dart reflections, which melt and mingle like the play of light upon minute threads of gossamer.





Top: Old Church at Vernon, Monet
Bottom: Sunrise on the Horai, Hashimoto Gaho

In this way Monet and his followers have based their method of painting upon the facts discovered by scientists in their study of light, and have thus made great advances in the rendering of light by means of pigments. It must be remembered, however, that the latter are poor substitutes for the colored *light* which they try to reproduce. White paint, for example, which represents the lightest or highest note of color in pigments, is infinitely inferior in luminosity to white light. So, while it is often said that these artists have raised the key of color, it would be more correct to say that they have raised the key of the shadows. By substituting for black and brown or red shadows delicate blue and violet ones, they have increased the general appearance of lightness, and by the increased vivacity and subtlety due to the *pointilliste* method of laying on the paint, have more nearly approximated to the effect produced upon the eye by the vibrations and the brilliancy of sunlight.

In this necessarily brief account of Monet's work I can add only one more particular — that it is absolutely objective. Corot was a poet at heart, seeking through nature to express his own subjectivity — himself; and this is the attitude of the majority of landscape-painters. Monet, on the contrary, is an eye, analyzing what it sees; the brain behind it is filled with passion, but with a passion aroused and satisfied entirely from without. The result is that, while most painters interpret through nature a mood of their own, Monet interprets those of nature purely; and through the frame of his picture we gaze, as through an open window, at nature herself appealing to us, if we have eyes to see, directly.

Yet many people are honestly unable to admire his pictures. The eyes of some are physically incapable of blending into one the separate patches. Others, again, by their temperament have so marked a preference for the solidity and facts of nature, that this spiritualized suggestion of it troubles them. I think one is to be congratulated if one can appreciate both the tremendous reality of Rousseau, the spirituality of Corot, and also the marvelous suggestion to one's spirit and imagination that may be found in Monet.

Now it is the suggestiveness to spirit and imagination that is the key-note of the Japanese motive. Buddhism teaches the impermanency and unreality of matter; that matter is but a limited symbol of

the universal soul. The Japanese laugh at our Western art, that tries to represent the human form and the forms of nature exactly. Our artists, they think, in the first place are feeding themselves upon what is not real, but an illusion; and, in the second place, are trying to make the spectator believe that what he sees on the canvas is a real man, or fish, or mountain. He is trying to prop up an illusion with a lie.

Now this is an idea not very dissimilar to the teaching of our own philosophers, from Plato to Herbert Spencer, but so far removed from our ordinary way of regarding this world and our relation to it, that I mention it only to get a starting-point for trying to understand how the Japanese feel toward art. We may state it briefly in the following way.

Matter is impermanent, the forms in which it appears to the eye are temporary. We ourselves were taught at school that the extent and shape of our earth are continually changing; and in Japan these changes are very frequent and remarkable, owing to the volcanic nature of the islands and to the almost daily occurrence of earthquakes. "Rivers shift their courses," writes Lafcadio Hearn, "coasts their outline, plains their level; volcanic peaks heighten or crumble; valleys are blocked by lava floods or landslides; lakes appear or disappear. Even the matchless sha23e of Fuji, that snowy miracle which has been the inspiration of artists for centuries, is said to have been slightly changed since my advent to the country; and not a few other mountains have in the same short time taken totally new forms. Only the general lines of the land, the general aspects of its nature, the general character of the seasons, remain fixed. Even the very beauty of the landscape is largely illusion — a beauty of shifting colors and moving mists." This was written in 1895, after the author had been living in Japan for about ten years.

This impermanent matter is the temporary manifestation of the Universal Spirit, which alone is eternal. In every form of nature, great or small, resides for the time being an atom of the Universal Spirit. It is this atom of spirit that is the life of the form in which it resides, determining its character. The Japanese speak of this inward spirit as "kokoro."

The highest aim in art, says Hashimoto Gaho, *is to express this*

kokoro. A picture that gives merely the temporary appearance of the objects of nature is not a work of art; it becomes such only if it manifests an expression of the "kokoro," or, in his own word, if it manifests "kokoromochi." At first sight this might seem like Corot's expression of the spirit of dawn and evening; but Corot put into his pictures what was in himself, whereas with Gaho the "kokoro" is entirely outside himself, residing in the object before him, actually there, whether Gaho himself were asleep or awake, alive or dead, having nothing to do with himself. Rousseau, therefore, to whom nature was an objective study, who tried to represent the strength that was in the rocks themselves, and the sinewy vigor that directs the growth of the oak, comes nearer to Gaho's idea of it; and Monet also, who has been described as only an "eye." On the other hand, we remember that the old Greeks also believed that there was a spirit in the waterfalls, the mountains, the trees; but in their art they represented it in human shape, as nymphs, naiads, oreads, dryads. This aim, however, is the very opposite to that of the Japanese artist, who strives to get away as far as possible from the accidents of impermanent form. In his attempt to do so he simplifies, generalizes, and conventionalizes.

So do Western artists, but not for the same purpose or to the same extent. They want to represent the human form or the landscape as its material form really appears to the eyes; but, not being able to imitate every hair on the head or every leaf and blade of grass, they are forced to give a general appearance of hair, of foliage, or of grass — they simplify and generalize. Then they make marks on the canvas which are not like leaves, but which we have all agreed to accept as suggesting the appearance of leaves; in fact, they conventionalize: but, observe, mostly with the intention of forcing upon us the material fact of these things being leaves. Some of our artists, however, say: "We do not care about representing leaves, but only the impression produced on our minds by them"; and these men whom we call impressionists, because of their going farther in generalization and conventionalizing, approach nearer to Japanese art, by the example of which, we must remember, however, they have been largely inspired.

Now the Japanese artist, taught by his religion to value spirit more

than matter, portrays material form only because he is obliged to make a material habitation for its "kokoro"; but he does not dwell on form. On the contrary, he tries to draw your attention away from the fact of his subject being a woman or a tree; he eliminates as far as possible the aggressiveness of. form, and accordingly simplifies, conventionalizes, and generalizes more than the Western artists do.

In the first place, he does not use oil paints, by means of which his Western brother gives solidity and elaboration to his objects. The Japanese artist paints with water-colors upon silk or paper, using thin transparent washes of color, manipulating his brush with a delicacy and decision that are superior to anything in Western painting. With one stroke of his brush, moving freely from the shoulder — for he kneels on the floor and works above his silk or paper — he can render, for example, a branch of a plum-tree, using the flat side and bearing more heavily on one end so as to render the shadow at the same time as the light part, and twisting the brush on to its edge to indicate knots or joints or such like. This in itself represents a wonderful skill in generalizing and simplification. It has led also to a wonderful skill and expressiveness in the use of line.

This is the second point to be noted: Gaho himself says that Japanese painting is founded upon line, that by varieties of modulation of its breadth and of dark and light the line itself may be made to manifest "kokoromochi."

Thirdly, the colors are laid on flat; forming a pattern of very subtle harmony.

Fourthly, the composition is not based on set forms of balanced arrangement, but is distinguished rather by irregularity, by its unexpectedness and surprises. Nor is it designed to hold our attention entirely within the frame. Often the spray of a flower, or a branch, belonging to some plant or tree that we cannot see, peeps into the picture, as if to remind us that there are other things beyond this tiny view, and that the latter is only an atom of the universe. We have noted, in the previous chapter. Whistler's borrowing of this device in the *Portrait of the Artist's Mother,*

Fifthly, conventionalization is carried to a point where to Western eyes it seems strange. For example, we may look through a number of prints by different artists, and the women's mouths will all

be represented by a similar arrangement of lines, which to us does not convey the idea of a natural mouth. To the Japanese, however, it does; and they would retort that many of our conventions in painting seem to them equally unintelligible and unreasonable. For, remember, that conventions are a sort of shorthand appeal to memory and experience; wherefore, since there is so much in the Japanese memory and experience that must remain unknown to us, we can never fully appreciate the conventions of their painting.

Every one of these characteristics of Japanese art that I have enumerated has influenced modern Western art. Space will not permit me to particularize, but if you will bear them in mind when you examine pictures by Degas and Whistler, the latter's Venetian etchings especially and the work of many American and foreign illustrators, you will be able to discover the traces of the influence unmistakably.

There is one other point among so many that might be alluded to. A Buddhist text declares that *he alone is wise who can see things without their individuality.* And it is this Buddhist way of seeing, as Lafcadio Hearn says, which makes the greatness of true Japanese art. One might explain this by saying that the Japanese artist discards the accident of individuality in favor of the type, but it is even more than this — that in the Particular he tries to express a portion of the Universal, regarding even his composition, for example, not as a complete finite arrangement but as a fragment of what he imagines as a universal geometry.

And now let us turn to Hashimoto Gaho's *Sunrise on the Horai.* The Horaizan is the Japanese Earthly Paradise; the dream-place of peaceful and exalted contemplation. Gaho, contrary to custom, has represented it upon the mountain-tops and pictured it in the purest hour of all, in the freshness of early sunrise. The sun itself is veiled in the vapor that rises up from the steep valley, at the bottom of which are the rice-fields, whither the laborers are already wending for their day's toil. Down there are the lives of men, their joys and sorrows, the multiple units of the human hive. All below is clouded in uncertain mists, but up here it is clear and serene; the foreground, a miniature panorama of mountain scenery, with pines, the symbol of eternity, and pagoda pleasure-houses of the soul; further back, a cone-like

peak of spiritual desire and mountain ramparts, barring the approach as yet to the ultimate Beyond.

Study, first, the linear arrangement: the broken level lines of the foreground, the soaring lines of the peak, the lines as of longing piled upon longing of the mountain mass, and then that diagonal line that fades into invisibility. Then from its gradual lifting up into height, and from its flight into the immensity of distance, the imagination settles back to the assured certainty of the foreground and the intimacy of the pine-trees, those familiar objects of the Japanese landscape.

Study, secondly, the exquisite gradations of tone, and the way the darks and lights are distributed in the composition, the occasional accents of dark, and the value of the empty spaces. There is perhaps nothing in painting which may give so pure and rarefied a joy as the way in which the Japanese artists give you the effect of definition melting into indefiniteness, and this picture of Gaho's is a fine example of the effect. It states just enough to render the imagination active, and then leaves it to its own wandering.

It is this suggestiveness to the imagination, moreover the decorative beauty and expressiveness of the lines and masses of the composition, and the choiceness and originality of the color-harmonies, rich or delicate, as the case may be, but always subtle, that are among the conspicuous charms of Japanese painting. These may be enjoyed, even when the subject refers to experiences that we do not share or is represented by means of conventions unfamiliar to us. In the accompanying example these limitations are scarcely to be felt. Japanese painting has already taught our Western artists a good deal; it has a further lesson for all of us, if only in the matter of simplification. How little there is in this picture, and yet how choice and meaningful the details that are introduced! The same is characteristic of the Japanese home life. The home is simple, adorned by a few choice treasures, stored in the little closet or *tokonama*, and taken out for the occasional enjoyment of the family or to greet the visit of a guest. The life, too, is outwardly simple. Though Japan has adopted Western notions, and undertaken the role of a first-class nation, with all the intricacies of trade relations, the appearance of the cities and of the outward life of the people is almost as simple as ever. In fact, there has never been a nation, at any rate since the great days of

Athens, whose art so closely reflected its outward life and the soul which it embodies.

Concluding Note

We have come to the end of the study that we set out to make. Step by step, we have marked the evolution of modern painting, from the Byzantine traditions which prevailed before Cimabue down to the latest possibilities introduced by the pointilliste method of Monet.

We have made the acquaintance of a majority of the greatest artists; of those who, being themselves men of originality, exercised a wide influence on others. In studying their points of view, and their methods of rendering what they saw in the way they felt it, we have gained a general insight into pictorial methods and motives, that will enable us to appreciate the infinite varieties of the same as they appear in other artists.

Turn by turn, we have visited different countries, according as the art of painting flourished in them simultaneously, or as it declined in one and reappeared with vigor in another. And, doing so, we have found that the manifestations of art have varied in response to the racial and temporary conditions of each country; and, while we have not attempted to explain genius as the result of these, we have examined how they influenced it.

We have seen how one impulse of movement followed another; all of them involving truth, but none monopolizing the whole truth; in fact, that the manifestations and possibilities of painting are wide and various as human nature. From this study, also, we should have discovered that the enjoyment to be derived from pictures is not only the satisfaction of our own predilections, of what most appeals to ourselves individually, but the interest to be gained from studying pictures as the record of the feeling and experience of other minds.

We have gained a fairly comprehensive bird's-eye view of the whole field of painting; sufficient, if our study must stop here, to enable us to recognize the landmarks of the subject; but offering, if we are able to step down and pursue the study in detail, a convenient groundwork for investigation.

It is not by the much, unavoidably omitted, that I beg the usefulness of this book may be judged, but by the value of what is included.

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