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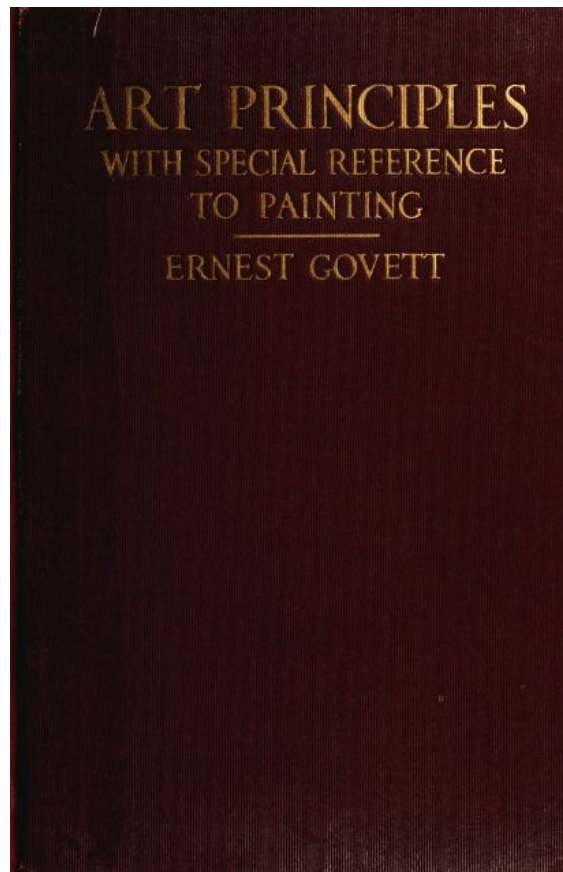
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Detail from "The Pursuit" of Fragonard.
(Frick Collection)

Art Principles

With Special Reference to Painting

**Together with Notes on the
Illusions Produced by the Painter**

By

Ernest Govett

With Thirty-one Illustrations



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1919

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PREFACE

This book is put forward with much diffidence, for I am well aware of its insufficiencies. My original idea was to produce a work covering all the principles of painting, but after many years spent in considering the various recorded theories relating to æsthetic problems, and in gathering materials to indicate how the accepted principles have been applied, I came to the conclusion that a single life is scarcely long enough for the preparation of an exhaustive treatise on the subject. Nevertheless, I planned a work of much wider scope than the one now presented, but various circumstances, and principally the hindrance to research caused by the war, impelled me to curtail my ambition. Time was fading, and my purpose seemed to be growing very old. I felt that if one has something to say, it is better to say it incompletely than to run the risk of compulsory silence. The book will be found little more than a skeleton, and some of its sections, notably those dealing with illusions in the art, contain only a few suggestions and instances, but perhaps enough is said to induce a measure of further inquiry into the subject.

That part of the work dealing with the fine arts generally is the result of long consideration of the apparent contradictions involved in the numerous suggested standards of art. In a little book on *The Position of Landscape in Art* (published under a nom de plume a few years ago), I threw out, as a *ballon d'essai*, an idea of the proposition now elaborated as the Law of General Assent, and I have been encouraged to affirm this proposition more strongly by the fact that its validity was not questioned in any of the published criticism of the former work; nor do I find reason to vary it after years of additional deliberation. I have not before dealt with the other propositions now put forward.

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The notes being voluminous I have relegated them to the end of the book, leaving the feet of the text pages for references only.

Where foreign works quoted have been translated into English, the English titles are recorded, and foreign quotations are given in English, save in one or two minor instances where the sense could not be precisely rendered in translation.

E. G.

NEW YORK, January, 1919.

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Art Principles

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INTRODUCTION

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In view of the many varied definitions of "Art" which have been put forward in recent times, and the equally diverse hypotheses advanced for the solution of æsthetic problems relating to beauty, it is necessary for one who discusses principles of art, to state what he understands by the terms "Art" and "Beauty."

Though having a widely extended general meaning, the term "Art" in common parlance applies to the fine arts only, but the term "Arts" has reference as well to certain industries which have utility for their primary object. This work considers only the fine arts, and when the writer uses the term "Art" or "Arts" he refers to one or more of these arts, unless a particular qualification is added. The definition of "Art" as applied to the fine arts, upon which he relies, is "The production of beauty for the purpose of giving pleasure," or as it is more precisely put, "The beautiful representation of nature for the purpose of giving disinterested pleasure." This is, broadly, the definition generally accepted, and is certainly the understanding of art which has guided the hands of all the creators of those great works in the various arts before which men have bowed as triumphs of human skill.

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There has been no satisfactory definition of "Beauty," nor can the term be shortly interpreted until there is a general agreement as to what it covers. Much of the confusion arising from the contradictory theories of æstheticists in respect of the perception of beauty is apparently due to the want of separate consideration of emotional beauty and beauty of mind, that is to say, the beauty of sensorial effects and beauty of expression respectively.¹ There are kinds of sensorial beauty which depend for their perception upon immediately preceding sensory experience, or particular coexistent surroundings which are not necessarily permanent, while in other cases a certain beauty may be recognized and subsequently appear to vanish altogether. From this it is obvious that any æsthetic system based upon the existence of an objectivity of beauty must fall to the ground. On the other hand, without an objectivity there can be no system, because in its absence a line of reasoning explaining cause and effect in the perception of beauty, which is open to demonstration, is naturally impossible. Nor may we properly speak of a philosophy of art.² We may reasonably consider æsthetics a branch of psychology, but the emotions arising from the recognition of beauty vary only in degree and not in kind, whether the beauty be seen in nature or art. Consequently there can be no separate psychological enquiry into the perception of beauty created by art as distinguished from that observable in nature.

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It must be a natural attraction for the insoluble mysteries of life that has induced so many philosophers during the last two centuries to put forward æsthetic systems. That no two of these systems agree on important points, and that each and every one has crumbled to dust from a touch of the wand of experience administered by a hundred hands, are well-known facts, yet still the systems continue to be calmly presented

as if they were valuable contributions to knowledge. Each new critic in the domain of philosophy carefully and gravely sets them up, and then carefully and gravely knocks them down.³ An excuse for the systems has been here and there offered, that the explanations thereof sometimes include valuable philosophical comments or suggestions. This may be, but students cannot reasonably be expected to sift out a few oats from a bushel of husks, even if the supply be from the bin of a Hegel or a Schopenhauer. Is it too much to suggest that these phantom systems be finally consigned to the grave of oblivion which has yawned for them so long and so conspicuously? Bubbles have certain measurements and may brilliantly glow, but they are still bubbles. It is as impossible to build up a system of philosophy upon the perception of beauty, which depends entirely upon physical and physiological laws, as to erect a system of ethics on the law of gravitation, for a feasible connection between superstructure and foundation cannot be presented to the mind.

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We may further note that a proper apprehension of standards of judgment in art cannot be obtained unless the separate and relative æsthetic values of the two forms of beauty are considered, because the beauty of a work may appear greater at one time than at another, according as it is more or less permanent or fleeting, that is to say, according as the balance of the sensorial and intellectual elements therein is more or less uneven; or if the beauty present be almost entirely emotional, according as the observer may be affected by independent sensorial conditions of time or place. Consequent upon these considerations, an endeavour has been made in this work to distinguish between the two forms of beauty in the various arts, and the separate grades thereof.

It will be noticed that the writer has adopted the somewhat unusual course of including fiction among the fine arts. Why this practice is not commonly followed is hard to determine, but no definition of a fine art has been or can be given which does not cover fiction. In the definition here accepted, the art is clearly included, for the primary object of fiction is the beautiful representation of nature for the purpose of giving disinterested pleasure.

Art is independent of conditions of peoples or countries. Its germ is unconnected with civilization, politics, religion, laws, manners, or morals. It may appear like a brilliant flower where the mind of man is an intellectual desert, or refuse to bloom in the busiest hive of human energy. Its mother is the imagination, and wherever this has room to expand, there art will grow, though the ground may be nearly sterile, and the bud wither away from want of nourishment. Every child is born a potential artist, for he comes into the world with sensorial nerves, and a brain which directs the imagination. The primitive peoples made beautiful things long before they could read or write, and the recognition of harmony of form appears to have been one of the first understandings in life after the primal instincts of self-preservation and the continuation of the species. Some of the sketches made by the cave men of France are equal to anything of the kind produced in a thousand years of certain ancient civilizations, commencing countless centuries after the very existence of the cave men had been forgotten; and even if executed now, would be recognized as indicating the possession of considerable talent by the artists. The greatest poem ever written was given birth in a country near which barbaric hordes had recently devastated populous cities, and wrecked a national fabric with which were interwoven centuries of art and culture. That the author of this poem had seen great works of art is certain, or he could not have conceived the shield of Achilles, but the laboured sculpture that had fired his imagination, and the legends which had perhaps been the seed of his masterpieces were doubtless buried with his own records beneath the tramp of numberless mercenaries. Fortunately here and there the human voice could draw from memory's store, and so the magic of Homer was whispered by the dying to the living; but even his time and place are now only vaguely known, and he remains like the waratah on the bleached pasture of some desert fringe—a solitary blaze of scarlet where all else is drear and desolate.

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PLATE 1



Head of Cephren, 4th Egyptian Dynasty
(Cairo Museum)



Chaldean Head: About 2600 B.C.
(Louvre)

Head of Cephren, 4th Egyptian Dynasty (Cairo Museum)
(Louvre)

Chaldean Head: About 2600 B.C.

(See [page 7](#))

Strong is the root of art, though frail the flower. Stifled in sun-burnt ground ere it can welcome the smile of light; fading with the first blast of air upon its delicate shoots; shrivelling back to dust when the buds are ready to break; or falling in the struggle to spread its branches after its beautiful blossoms have scattered their fragrance around: whatever condition has brought it low, it ever fights again—ever seeks to assure mankind that while it may droop or disappear, its seed, its heart, its life, are imperishable, and surely it will bloom again in all its majesty. Sometimes with decades it has run a fitful course; sometimes with centuries; sometimes with millenniums. It has heralded every civilization, but its breath is freedom, and it flourishes and sickens only with liberty. Trace its course in the life of every nation, and the track will be found parallel with the line of freedom of thought. A solitary plant may bloom unimpeded far from tyranny's thrall, but the art and soul of a nation live, and throb, and die, together.

Egypt, Babylon, Crete, Greece, Rome, tell their stories through deathless monuments, and all are alike in that they demonstrate the dependence of art expansion upon freedom of action and opinion. An art rises, develops another and another, and they proceed together on their way. Sooner or later comes catastrophe in the shape of crushing tyranny which curbs the mind with slavery, or steel-bound sacerdotal rules which say to the artist "Thou shalt go no further," or annihilation of nation and life. What imagination can picture the expansion of art throughout the world had its flight been free since the dawn of history? Greece reached the sublime because its mind was unfettered, but twenty or thirty centuries before Phidias, Egyptian art had arrived at a loftier plane than that on which the highest plastic art of Greece was standing but a few decades before the Olympian Zeus uplifted the souls of men, while whole civilizations with their arts had lived and died, and were practically forgotten.

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It is to be observed that while in its various isolated developments, art has proceeded from the immature to the mature, there has been no general evolution, as in natural life, but on the other hand there seems to be a limit to its progress. So far as our imagination can divine, no higher reaches in art are attainable than those already achieved. The mind can conceive of nothing higher than the spiritual, and this cannot be represented in art except by means of form; while within the range of human intelligence, no suggestion of spiritual form can rise above the ideals of Phidias. Of the purely human form, nothing greater than the work of Praxiteles and Raphael can be pictured on our brains. There may be poets who will rival Homer and Shakespeare, but it is exceedingly doubtful. In any case we must discard the law of evolution as applicable to the arts, with the one exception of music, which, on account of the special functioning of its signs, must be put into a division by itself.^[a]

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But although there has been no general progression in art parallel with the growth of the sciences and civilization, there have been, as already indicated, many separate epochs of art cultivation in various countries, sometimes accompanied by the production of immortal works, which epochs in themselves seem to provide examples of restricted evolution.⁴ It is desirable to refer to these art periods, as they are commonly called, for the purpose of removing, if possible, a not uncommon apprehension that they are the result of special conditions operating an æsthetic stimulus, and that similar or related conditions must be present in any country if the flame of art there is to burn high and brightly.⁵ The well-defined periods vary largely both in character and duration, the most important of them—the Grecian development and the Italian Renaissance—covering two or three centuries each, and the others, as the French thirteenth century sculpture expansion, the English literary revival in the sixteenth century,⁶ and the Dutch development in painting in the seventeenth, lasting only a few decades. These latter periods can be dispensed with at once because they

were each concerned with one art only, and therefore can scarcely have resulted from a general æsthetic stimulus. But the Grecian and Italian movements applied to all the arts. They represented natural developments from the crude to the advanced, of which all nations produce examples, and were only exceptional in that they reached higher levels in art than were attained by other movements. But there is no evidence to show that they were brought about by special circumstances outside of the arts themselves. While there were national crises preceding the one development, there was no trouble of consequence to herald the other, nor was there any parallel between the conditions of the two peoples during the progress of the movements. A short reference to each development will show that its rise and decline were the outcome of simple matter-of-fact conditions of a more or less accidental nature, uninfluenced by an æsthetic impulse in the sense of inspiration.

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The most common suggestion advanced to account for the rise in Grecian art, is that it was due to the exaltation of the Greek mind through the victories of Marathon, Plataea, and Salamis. That a people should be so trampled upon as were the Greeks; that their cities should be razed, their country desolated, and their commerce destroyed; that notwithstanding all this they should refuse to give way before enemies outnumbering them twenty, fifty, or even a hundred to one; and that after all they should crush these enemies, was no doubt a great and heroic triumph, likely to exalt the nation and feed the imagination of the people for a long time to come; but that these victories were responsible for the lofty eminence reached by the Greek artists, cannot be maintained. From what we know of Calamis, Myron, and others, it is clear that Grecian art was already on its way to the summit reached by Phidias when Marathon and Salamis were fought, though the victories of the Greek arms hastened the development for the plain reason that they led to an increased demand for works of art. And the decline in Grecian art resulted purely and simply from a lessened demand. Though this was the reason for the general decay, there was a special cause for the apparent weakening with the commencement of the fourth century B.C. In the fifth century Phidias climbed as high in the accomplishment of ideals as the imagination could soar. He reached the summit of human endeavour. Necessarily then, unless another Phidias arose, whatever in art came after him would appear to mark a decline. But it is scarcely proper to put the case of Phidias forward for comparative purposes. He carried the art of sculpture higher than it is possible for the painter to ascend, and so we should rather use the giants of the fourth century—Scopas, Praxiteles, Lysippus, Apelles—as the standards to be compared with the foremost spirits of the Italian Renaissance—Raphael and Michelangelo—for each of these groups achieved the human ideal, though failing with the spiritual ideal established by Phidias.

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It must be remembered that all good art means slow work—long thinking, much experiment, tedious attention to detail in plan, and careful execution. Meanwhile men have to live, even immortal artists, and rarely indeed does one undertake a work of importance on his own account. It is true that in the greater days of Greece the best artists were almost entirely employed by a State, or at least to execute works for public exhibition, and doubtless the payment they received was quite a secondary matter with them, but nevertheless few could practise their art without remuneration. During the fifth and fourth centuries great events were constantly happening in Greece, and in consequence there were numberless temples to build and adorn, groves to decorate, men to honour, and monumental tombs to erect. Innumerable statues of gods and goddesses were wanted, and we must not forget the wholesale destruction of Athenian and other temples and sculptures during the Persian invasion. In fact for a century and a half after Plataea, there was practically an unlimited demand for works of art, and it was only when the empire of Alexander began to crumble away that conditions changed. While Greece was weakening Rome was growing and her lengthening shadows were approaching the walls of Athens. Greece could build no more temples when her people were becoming slaves of Rome; she could order no more monuments when defeat was the certain end of struggle. And so the decline was brought about, not by want of artists, but through the dearth of orders and the consequent neglect of competition.

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In the case of the Italian Renaissance the decadence was not due to the same cause. The art of Greece declined gradually in respect of quantity as well as quality, while in Italy after the decay in quality set in, art was as nourishing as ever from the point of view of demand. The change in the character of the art was due entirely to Raphael's achievements. As with the early Greek, nearly the whole of the early Italian art was concerned with religion, though in this case there were very few ideals. The numerous ancient gods of Greece and Rome were long gone, to become only classical heroes with the Italians, and their places were taken by twenty or thirty personages from the New Testament. Incidents from the Old Testament were sometimes painted, but nearly all the greater work dealt with the life of Christ and the Saints. The painters of the first century of the Renaissance distributed their attention fairly equally among these personages, but as time went on and the art became of a superior order, artists aimed at the highest development of beauty that their imaginations could conceive, and hence the severe beauty that might be shown in a picture of Christ or a prominent Saint, had commonly to give way to a more earthly perfection of feature and form, which, suggesting an ideal, could only be given to the figure of the Virgin. And so the test of the power of an artist came to be instinctively decided by his representation of the Madonna. No doubt there were many persons living in the fifteenth century who watched the gradually increasing beauty of the Madonna as depicted by the succession of great painters then working, and wondered when and where the summit would be reached—when an artist would appear beyond whose work the imagination could not pass, for there is a limit to human powers.

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The genius arose in Raphael, and when he produced in the last ten or twelve years of his life, Madonna after Madonna, so far in advance of anything that had hitherto been done, so great in beauty as to leave his fellow artists lost in wonder, so lofty in conception that the term "divine" was applied to him in his lifetime, it was inevitable that a decadence should set in, for so far as the intelligence could see, whatever came after him must be inferior. He did not ascend to the height of Phidias, for a pure ideal of spiritual form is beyond the power of the painter,^[b] but as with Praxiteles he reached a perfect human ideal, and so gained the supreme pinnacle of his art. But while there was an inevitable decadence after him, as after Praxiteles, it was, as already indicated, only in the character of the art, for in Italy artists generally were as busy for a hundred years after Raphael, as during his time. Michelangelo, Titian, and the other giants who were working when Raphael died, kept up the renown of the period for half a century or so, but it seemed impossible for artists who came on the scene after Raphael's death, to enter upon an entirely original course. The whole of the new generation seemed to cling to the models put forward by the great Urbino painter, save some of the Venetians who had a model of their own in Titian.

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Thus it is clear that the rise and decline of the Grecian and Italian movements were due to well ascertained causes which had nothing to do with a national æsthetic impulse; nor is there evidence of such an impulse connected with other art developments.

The suggestion that a nation may be assisted in its art by emotional or psychological influences arising from patriotic exaltation, is only an extension of an opinion commonly held, that the individual artist is subject to similar influences, though due to personal exaltation connected with his art. It is as well to point out that there is only one way to produce a work of art, and that is to combine the exercise of the imagination with skill in execution. The artist conceives an idea and puts it into form. He does nothing more. He can rely upon no extraneous influence. It is suggested that to bring about a supreme accomplishment in art, the imagination must be associated with something outside of our power of control—some impulse which acts upon the brain but is independent of it. This unmeasured force or lever is usually known by the term "Inspiration." It is supposed that this force comes to certain persons when they have particular moods upon them, and gives them a great idea which they may use in a painting, a poem, or a musical composition. The suggestion is attractive, but in the long range of historical record there is no evidence that accident, in the shape of inspiration or other psychological lever, has been responsible in the slightest degree for the production of a work of art. The writer of a sublime poem, or the painter of a perfect Madonna, uses the same kind of mental and material labour as the man who chisels a lion's head on a chair, or adds a filigree ornament to a bangle. The difference is one of degree only. The poet or painter is gifted with a vivid imagination which he has cultivated by study; and by diligence has acquired superlative facility in execution, which he uses to the best advantage. The work of the furniture carver or jeweller does not require such high powers, and he climbs only a few steps of the ladder whose uppermost rungs have been scaled by the greater artists.

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If in the course of the five and twenty centuries during which works of high art have been produced, some of them had been executed with the assistance of a psychological impulse directed independently of the will, there would certainly have been references to the phenomenon by the artists concerned, or the very numerous art historians, but without a known exception, all the great artists who have left any record of the cause of their success, or whose views on the subject are to be gained by indirect references, have attributed this success to hard study, or manual industry, or both together. We know little of the opinion of the ancient Greeks on the matter, but the few anecdotes we have, indicate that their artists were very practical men indeed, and hardly likely to expect mysterious psychological influences to help them in their work. So with the Romans, and it is noticeable that the key to the production of beauty in poetry, in the opinion of Virgil and Horace, is careful preparation and unlimited revision. This appears to be the view of some modern poets, and if Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, had experienced visionary inspiration, we should surely have heard of it. Fortunately some of the most eminent painters of modern times have expressed themselves definitely upon the point. Lionardo observed that the painter arrives at perfection by manual operation; and Michelangelo asserted that Raphael acquired his excellence by study and application. Rubens praised his brushes, by which he meant his acquired facility, as the instruments of his fortune; and Nicholas Poussin attributed his success to the fact that he neglected nothing, referring of course to his studies. According to his biographers, the triumphs of Claude were due to his untiring industry, while Reynolds held that nothing is denied to well directed labour. And so with many others down to Turner, whose secret according to Ruskin, was sincerity and toil.

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It would seem to be possible for an artist to work himself into a condition of emotional excitement,⁷ either involuntarily when a great thought comes to him, or voluntarily when he seeks ideas wherewith to execute a brilliant conception; and it is comprehensible that when in this condition, which is practically an extreme concentration of his mental energy upon the purpose in hand, images or other æsthetic suggestions suitable for his work may present themselves to his mind. These he might regard as the result of inspiration, but in reality they would be the product of a trained imagination operating under advantageous conditions.

Nor can any rule be laid down that the character or temperament of an artist influences his work, for if instances can be given in support of such an assertion, at least an equal number may be adduced which directly oppose it. If we might approximately gauge the true characters of Fra Angelico and Michelangelo from a study of their work, it is certain that no imagination could conjure up the actual personalities of Perugino and Cellini, from an examination of the paintings of the one and the sculptures of the other. What can be said on the subject when assassins of the nature of Corenzio and Caravaggio painted so many beautiful things, and evil-minded men like Ribera and Battistello adorned great churches with sacred compositions? If the work of Claude appears to harmonize with his character, that of Turner does not. "Friendless in youth: loveless in manhood; hopeless in death." Such was Turner according to Ruskin, but is there any sign of this in his works? Not a trace. If any conclusion as to his character and temperament can be drawn from Turner's paintings, it is that he was a gay, light-hearted thinker, with all the optimism and high spirits that come from a delight in beautiful things. The element of mood is unquestionably of importance in the work of an artist, but it is not uncommon to find the character of his designs contrary to his mood. Poets, as in the case of Hood, or painters as with Tassaert, may execute the most lively pieces while in moods verging on despair. With some men adversity quickens the imagination with fancies; with others it benumbs their faculties.

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The tendency of popular criticism to search for psychological phenomena in paintings, apparently arises largely from the difficulty in comprehending how it is that certain artists of high repute vary their styles of painting after many years of good work, and produce pictures without the striking beauty characterizing their former efforts. Sometimes when age is beginning to tell upon them, they broaden their manner considerably, as with Rembrandt and others of the seventeenth century, and many recent artists of lesser fame. The critic, very naturally perhaps, is chary of condemning work from the hand of one who has given evidence of consummate skill, and so seeks for hidden beauties in lieu of those to which he has been accustomed. A simple enquiry into the matter will show that the change of style in these cases has a commonplace natural cause.

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PLATE 2



"Le Bon Dieu d'Amiens"
 (Amiens Cathedral)
 (See page 319)

"Le Bon Dieu d'Amiens"
 (Amiens Cathedral)

(See [page 319](#))

To be in the front rank an artist must have acquired a vast knowledge of the technique of his art, and have a powerful imagination which has been highly cultivated. But the qualifications must be balanced. Commonly when this balance is not present the deficiency is in the imagination, but there are instances where, though the power of execution is supreme, the imagination has so far exceeded all bounds as to render this power of comparatively small practical value. The most conspicuous example of this want of balance is Lionardo, who accomplished little though he was scarcely surpassed in execution by Raphael or Michelangelo. His imagination invariably ran beyond his execution; his ideas were always above the works he completed or partly finished: he saw in fact far beyond anything he could accomplish, and so was never satisfied with the result of his labour. At the same time he was filled with ideas in the sciences, and investigated every branch of knowledge without bringing his conclusions to fruition. During the latter part of his life, Michelangelo showed a similar defect in a lesser degree, for his unfinished works of the period exceed in number those he completed. Naturally such intellectual giants, whose imaginations cannot be levelled with the highest ability in execution, are few, but the lesser luminaries who fail, or who constantly fail, in carrying out their conceptions, are legion, though they may have absorbed the limit of knowledge which they are capable of acquiring in respect of execution. It is common for a painter to turn out a few masterpieces and nothing else of permanent value. This was the case with numerous Italian artists of the seventeenth century, and it is indeed a question whether there is one of them, except perhaps Domenichino, whose works have not a considerable range in æsthetic value.

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There have been still more artists whose powers of execution were far beyond the flights of their imaginations. They include the whole of the seventeenth century Dutch school with Rembrandt at their head, and the whole of the Spanish school of the same period, except El Greco, Zurbaran, and Murillo. When an artist is in the first rank in respect of execution, but is distinctly inferior in imaginative scope, his work in all grades of his art, except the highest, where ideals are possible, seems to have a greater value than it really possesses because we are insensibly cognizant that the accomplishment rises above the idea upon which it is founded. On the other hand his work in the highest plane appears to possess a lower value, because we are

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surprised that ideals have not been attempted, and that the types of the spiritual and classical personages represented are of the same class of men and women as those exhibited in works dealing with ordinary human occupations or actions. This is why the sacred and classical pictures of Rembrandt, Vermeer of Delft, and the other leading Dutch artists, appear to be below their portrait and genre work in power.

The course of variation in the work of a great painter follows the relative power of his imagination and his execution. Where there is a fair balance between the two, the work of the artist increases in æsthetic value with his age and experience; but when his facility in execution rises above the force of his imagination, then his middle period is invariably the best, his later work showing a gradual depreciation in quality. The reason is obvious. The surety of the hand and eye diminishes more rapidly than the power of the mind, which in fact is commonly enhanced with experience till old age comes on. Great artists who rely mostly upon their powers of execution, and exhibit limited fertility in invention, such as Rembrandt, have often a manner which is so interwoven with the effects they seek, that they are seldom or never able to avail themselves of the assistance of others in the lesser important parts of their work. A man with the fertile mind of a Rubens may gather around him a troupe of artists nearly as good as himself in execution, who will carry out his designs completely save for certain details. Thus he is not occupied with laborious toil, and the decreasing accuracy of his handiwork troubles him but little. On the other hand a Rembrandt, whose merits lie chiefly in the delicate manipulation of light effects and intricate shades in expression, remains tied to his canvas. He feels intensely the decreasing facility in the use of his brush which necessarily accompanies his advancing years, and his only recourse from a stoppage of work is an alteration in manner involving a reduction of labour and a lessened strain upon the eyesight. With few exceptions the great masterpieces of Rembrandt were produced in his middle period. During the last ten or fifteen years of his life he gradually increased his breadth of manner. He was still magnificent in general expression, but the intimate details which produced such glorious effects in the great Amsterdam picture, and fifty or more of his single portraits, could not be obtained with hog's hair.⁸

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Disconnecting then the work of the artist with inspiration or other psychological force, we may now enquire what is meant by "Genius," "Natural gift," or other term used to explain the power of an artist to produce a great work? It would appear that the answer is closely concerned with the condition of the sensorial nerves at birth, and the precocity or otherwise of the infantile imagination. From the fact that we can cultivate the eye and ear so as to recognize forms of harmony which we could not before perceive, and seeing that the effect of this cultivation is permanent, it follows that exercise must bring about direct changes in the nerves associated with these organs, attuning them so to speak, and enabling them to respond to newer harmonies arising from increased complexity of the signs used.⁹ It is matter of common knowledge that the structure of the sensorial nerves varies largely in different persons at birth, and when a boy at a very early age shows precocious ability in music or drawing, we may properly infer that the condition of his optic or aural nerves is comparatively advanced, that is to say, it is much less rudimentary than that of the average person at the same age; in other words accident has given him a nerve regularity which can only be gained by the average boy after long exercise. The precocious youth has not a nerve structure superior in kind, but it is abnormally developed, and so he is ahead of his confreres in the matter of time, for under equal conditions of study he is sooner able to arrive at a given degree of skill.

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But early appreciation of complex harmony, and skill in execution, are not enough to produce a great artist, for there must be associated with these things a powerful imagination. While the particular nerves or vessels of the brain with which the imagination is concerned have not been identified, we know by analogy and experience that the exercise of the imagination like that of any other function, is necessary for its development, and according as we allow it to remain in abeyance so we reduce its active value. Clearly also, the seat of the imagination at birth is less rudimentary in some persons than in others. From these facts it would appear that when both the sensory nerve structure and the seat of the imagination are advanced at birth, then we have the basis upon which the precocious genius is built up. With such conditions, patient toil and deep study are alone necessary to produce a sublime artist. Evidently it is extremely rare for the imagination and nerve structure to be together so advanced naturally, but commonly one is more than rudimentary, and the deficiency in the other is compensated for by study.¹⁰

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Of course these observations are general, for there arises the question, to what extent can the senses and imagination be trained? We may well conceive that there is a limit to the development of the sense organs. There must come a period when the optic or aural nerves can be attuned no further; and is the limit equal in all persons? The probability is that it is not. The physical character of the nerves almost certainly varies in different persons, some being able to appreciate more complex harmonies than others, granted the limit of development. This is a point which has to be considered, particularly in the case of music wherein as a rule, the higher the beauty the more complex the combinations of signs. There is a parallel problem to solve in respect of the imagination. We can well believe that there was something abnormal in the imagination of Shakespeare, beyond the probability that in his case the physiological system controlling the seat of the imagination was unusually advanced at birth. It is quite certain that with such a man a given training would result in a far greater advance in the functioning capacity of the imagination, than in the vast majority of persons who might commence the training on apparently equal terms; and he would be able to go further—to surpass the point which might be the limit of development with most persons.

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These questions are of the highest importance, but they cannot be determined. We are acquainted with certain facts relating to the general development of the sense organs, and of the imagination; and in regard to the former we know that there is a limit within comprehensible bounds, but we see only very dimly anything finite in the scope of the imagination. With what other term than "limitless" can we describe the imagination of a Shakespeare? But in all cases, whatever the natural conditions at birth, it is clear that hard work is the key to success in art, and though some must work harder than others to arrive at an equal result, it is satisfactory to know that generally Carlyle was right when he described "genius" as the transcendent capacity for taking trouble, and we are not surprised that Cicero should have come to the conclusion that diligence is a virtue that seems to include all the others.

Seeing that the conclusions above defined (and some to be later drawn), are not entirely in accord with a large part of modern criticism based upon what are commonly described as new and improved forms of the painter's art, it is necessary to refer to these forms, which are generally comprehended under what is known as Impressionism.^[c] Alas, to the frailty of man must we ascribe the spread of this movement, which has destroyed so many bright young intellects, and is at this moment leading thousands of gentle spirits along the level path which ends in despair. For the real road of art is steep, and difficult, and long. Year upon year of patient thought, patient observation, and patient toil, lie ahead of every man who covets a crown of success as a painter. He must seek to accumulate vast stores of knowledge of the human form and its anatomy, of nature

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in her prolific variety, of linear and aerial perspective, of animals which move on land or through the air, of the laws of colours and their combinations. He must sound the depths of poetry, and sculpture, and architecture; absorb the cream of sacred and profane history; and with all these things and many more, he must saturate his mind with the practical details of his art. Every artist whose work the world has learned to admire has done his best to gain this knowledge, and certainly no great design was ever produced by one whose youth and early manhood were not worn with ardent study. For knowledge and experience are the only foundations upon which the imagination can build. Every new conception is a rearrangement of known signs, and the imagination is powerless to arrange them appropriately without a thorough comprehension of their character and significance.

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This then is the programme of work which must be adopted by any serious aspirant to fame in the art of the painter, and it is perhaps not surprising that the number of artists who survive the ordeal is strictly limited. In any walk of life where years of struggle are necessary for success, how small the proportion of men who persevere to the end; who present a steel wall to misfortune and despair, and with an indomitable will, overcome care, and worry, and fatigue, for year after year, till at last the clouds disappear, and they are able to front the world with an all-powerful shield of radiant knowledge! But unfortunately in the painter's art it is difficult to convince students of the necessity for long and hard study, because there is no definite standard for measuring success or failure which they can grasp without long experience. In industries where knowledge is applied to improvement in appliances, or methods with definite ends, or to the realization of projects having a fixed scope, failure is determined by material results measured commonly by mathematical processes of one kind or another. A man produces a new alloy which he claims will fulfil a certain purpose. It is tested by recognized means: all concerned admit the validity of the test, and there the matter ends. But in the arts, while the relative value of the respective grades is equally capable of demonstration, the test is of a different kind. Instead of weights and measures which every man can apply, general experience must be brought in. The individual may be right in his judgment, and commonly is, but he is unable to measure the evidence of his senses by material demonstration, and as he has no means of judging whether his senses are normal, except by comparison, he is liable to doubt his own experience if it clash with that of others. Thus, he may find but little beauty in a given picture, and then may read or hear that the work has a high æsthetic value, and without calling to mind the fact that no evidence in the matter is conclusive unless it be based on general experience, he is liable to believe that his own perception is in some way deficient.

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Thus in the arts, and particularly in painting, there is ample scope for the spread of false principles. Poetry has an advantage in that the intellect must first be exercised before the simplest pictures are thrown on the brain, so feeble or eccentric verse appeals to very few persons, and seldom has a clientèle, if one may use the word, outside of small coteries of weak thinkers. It is difficult also in sculpture to put forward poor works as of a high order, because this art deals almost entirely with simple human and animal forms in respect of which the knowledge is universal, and so as signs they cannot be varied except in the production of what would be immediately recognized as monstrosities. But in painting an immense variety in kind of beauty may be produced, from a simple colour harmony to the representation of ideal forms involving the highest sensorial and intellectual reaches, and there is ample scope for the misrepresentation of æsthetic effects—for the suggestion that a work yielding a momentary appeal to the senses is superior to a high form of permanent beauty.

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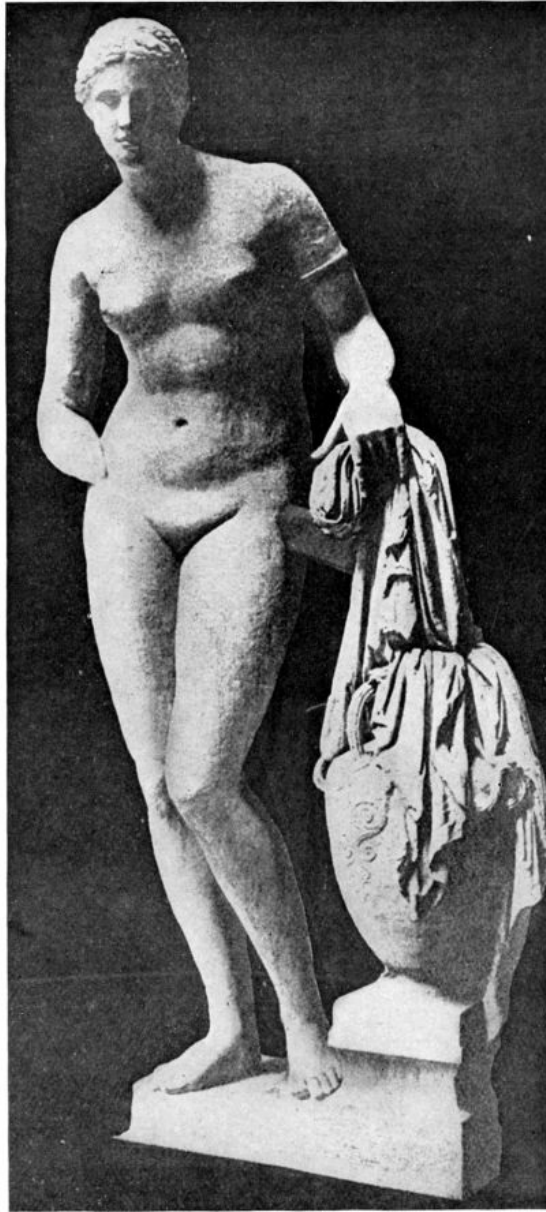
It is to the ease with which simple forms of ephemeral beauty may be produced in painting that is due the large number of artists who should never have entered upon the profession. Nearly every person of average intelligence is capable with a few lessons of producing excellent imitations of natural things in colour, as for instance, flowers, bits of landscape, and so on, and great numbers of young men and women, surprised at the facility with which this work can be done, erroneously suppose that nature has endowed them with special gifts, and so take up the art of painting as a career. Hence for every sculptor there are twenty painters. Now these youthful aspirants usually start with determination and hope, but although they know the value of studious toil, they rarely comprehend that this toil, long continued, is the only key to success. Most of them seem under the impression that inspiration will come to their assistance, and that their genius will enable them to dispense with much of the labour which others, less fortunate, must undertake. They do not understand that all painters, even a Raphael, must go through long years of hard application.

We need not be surprised that there should be occasional eruptions in art circles tending to the exaltation of the immature at the expense of the superior, or even the sublime, for we have always with us the undiligent man of talent, and the "unrecognized genius." But hitherto, movements of the kind have not been serious, for with one exception they are lost in oblivion, and the exception is little more than a vague memory. That the present movement should have lasted so long is not difficult to understand when we remember the modern advantages for the spread of new sensations—the exhibitions, the unlimited advertising scope, and above all the new criticism, with its extended vocabulary, its original philosophy, and its boundless discoveries as to the psychological and musical qualities of paint. That history is silent as to previous eruptions of the kind before the seventeenth century is a matter of regret. It is unlikely that the greatest of all art epochs experienced an impressionist fever, for one cannot imagine the spread of spurious principles within measurable distance of a State (Thebes) which went so far as to prohibit the representation of unbeautiful things. In respect of poetry we know that the Greeks stood no nonsense, for did not Zoilus suffer an ignominious death for venturing upon childish criticism of Homer? In Rome eccentric painters certainly found some means to thrive, for where "Bohemian" poets gathered, who neglected the barber and the bath, and pretended an æsthetic exclusiveness, there surely would painters of "isms" be found in variety. Naturally in the early stages of the Renaissance, when patronage of the arts was almost confined to the Church, and so went hand in hand with learning, inferior art stood small chance of recognition; and a little later when Lorenzo gathered around him the intellectual cream of Italy; when the pupils of Donatello were spreading the light of his genius; when the patrician beauties of Florence were posing for Ghirlandaio and his brilliant confrères, and when the minds of Lionardo and Michelangelo were blooming; who would have dared to talk of the psychological qualities of paint, or suggest the composition of a fresco "symphony"?

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PLATE 3



Ancient Copy of the Cnidian Venus of Praxiteles
(Vatican) (See page 111)

**Ancient Copy of the Cnidian Venus of
Praxiteles**
(Vatican)

(See [page 111](#))

But another century and more passed away. The blaze of the Renaissance had gone down, but the embers were kept alive, for Italy still seemed to vibrate with a desire to paint. Simultaneously in Flanders, in Holland, in France, and in England, private citizens appeared to develop a sudden demand for pictures, and quite naturally artists multiplied and fed the flame. Outside of Italy the hustle and bustle in the art world were novelties to the general public, though pleasant ones withal, and for half a century or more they delighted in the majestic designs of Rubens and Van Dyck, the intimate scenes of the Dutch artists, and the delicate landscapes of Claude and Poussin and their followers, which were continually finding their way from Rome. The simplicity of the people protected the arts. They knew the hard labour involved in the production of a picture; the worries, the struggles, the joys of the painters; and daily saw beautiful imitations of every-day life in the shops and markets. They must have been proud of them—insensibly proud of the value of human endeavour. For them the sham and immature had no place: there is not a single example of spurious art of the first three quarters of the seventeenth century that has come down to us from Holland or Flanders. But while the Dutch school was at the height of its fame, a change was marking Italian art conditions. The half score of academies scattered through the country were still in a state of activity, carrying on, as far as they could, the traditions of the Renaissance: from all parts of Europe students were still pouring in, endeavouring to glean the secrets of the immortals; and there was no apparent decrease in the demand for pictures from the religious foundations and private buyers. But the character of the art produced was rapidly declining: the writing on the wall was being done by the hand that wielded the brush. As a necessary consequence the trader was called in and art began to be commercialized. Worse still, fashions appeared, guided by successive masters in the various centres, often with an influence quite out of proportion with their merits.

By the middle of the century a general fall in activity and enthusiasm was noticeable. The disciples of the Roman school, largely through the pernicious influence of Bernini, had nearly forgotten the great lessons taught by the followers of Raphael, and later by the three Carracci, and were fast descending below mediocrity; the Florentine school included half a dozen good painters, mostly students of Berritini: Venice

was falling into a stagnation in which she remained till the appearance of Longhi and Tiepolo and their brethren; Bologna was living on the reputation of the Carracci, and had yet to recover with the aid of Cignani: Milan and Genoa as separate schools had practically faded away; and the Neapolitan school was relying on Salvator Rosa, though Luca Giordano was growing into an inexhaustible hive of invention. This was the condition of Italian art, while political and other troubles were further complicating the position of artists. For most of them the time was gloomy and the future dark. A few turned to landscape; others extended the practice of copying the early masters for the benefit of foreign capitals, while some sought for novelty in still-life, or in the then newly practised pastel work. But there was a considerable number who would have none of these things; some of them with talent but lacking industry, and others with industry but void of imagination. What were these to do at a time when at the best the outlook was poor?

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An answer came to this question. A new taste must be cultivated, and for an art that required less study and trouble to produce than the sublime forms with which the Renaissance culminated. So whispers went round that Raphael was not really so great a master as was supposed, and that with Michelangelo he was out of date and did not comprehend the real meaning of art—very similar conclusions with which the modern impressionist movement was heralded.¹¹ The discovery was made in Rome, but the news expanded to Florence and Naples, and Venice, and behold the result—Sprezzatura, or to use the modern word, Impressionism, that is to say, the substitution of sketches for finished pictures, though this is not the definition usually given to it. But fortunately for the art of the time the innovation was chiefly confined to coteries. All that could be said or done failed to convince the principal patrons of the period that a half finished work is so beautiful as a completed one, and so the novelties rarely found entrance into great collections, nor were they used to adorn the interiors of public buildings. But a good many of them were executed though they have long ceased to interest anybody. Now and again one comes across an example in a sleepy Italian village, or in the smaller shops of Rome or Florence, but it is quickly put aside as a melancholy memento of a disordered period of art when talented painters had to struggle for fame, and the untalented for bread.

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The cult of Sprezzatura faded to a glimmer before the end of the seventeenth century. Bernini was dead, and Carlo Maratta with a few others led the way in re-establishing the health if not the brilliancy and renown of Italian art. Nor did a recurrence of the movement occur in the next century. During this period there was comparatively little call for art in Italy, and at the end of it, when political disturbances made havoc with academies and artists, the principal occupation of Italian painters with talent was precisely that of their skilled brethren in Holland and Flanders—the manufacture of "old" masterpieces. It was reserved for the second half of the nineteenth century for Sprezzatura to make its reappearance, and this time Italy followed the lead of France.

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There are many methods and mannerisms which go under the name of Impressionism, but they are mostly suggestions in design or experiments in tones which were formerly produced solely as studies to assist artists in executing their complete works, or else eccentricities which are obviously mere camouflage for lack of skill.¹² Sometimes the sketches are slightly amplified with more or less finished signs, and now and then novelties are present in the shape of startling colour effects; but in all cases the impartial observer sees in the pictures only sensorial beauty of a kind which is inevitably short lived, while his understanding is oppressed with the thought, firstly that the picture is probably the result of a want of diligence on the part of the artist, and secondly that its exhibition as a serious work is somewhat of a reflection upon the intelligence of the public.

Obviously the fundamental basis of Impressionism is weak and illogical, for in our conception of nature it invites us to eliminate the understanding. What the impressionist practically says is: "We do not see solid form; we see only flat surface in which objects are distinguished by colours. The artist should reproduce these colours irrespective of the nature of the objects." But the objects are distinguished by our knowledge and experience, and if we are to eliminate these in one art, why not in another? Why trouble about carving in the round when we only actually see in the human figure a flat surface defined by colour? There is no scene in nature such as the impressionist paints, nor can such a scene be thrown upon the mind of the painter as a natural scene. Except in absolute deserts there are no scenes without many signs which are clearly defined to the eye, and which the artist can paint. He cannot of course produce all the signs in a view, but he can indicate sufficient of them to make a beautiful picture apart from the tones, and there can be no valid æsthetic reason for substituting for these signs vague suggestions of colour infinitely less definite than the signs as they appear in nature. Nor is there any such atmosphere in nature as the impressionist usually paints. We do not see blotched outlines of human figures, but the outlines in nature, except at a considerable distance, appear to us clear and decisive though delicately shaded, and not as seen through a veil of steam. Nor has any valid reason been advanced for juxtaposing pure colours instead of blending them before use.¹³ Why should the eye have to seek a particular distance from a painting in order that the colours might naturally blend, when the artist can himself blend them and present a harmony which is observable at any reasonable distance? We do not carve a statue with blurred and broken edges, and then tell the observer that the outlines will appear correct if he travel a certain distance away before examining them.

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In giving nearly his whole attention to colour the impressionist limits his art to the feeblest form, and produces a quickly tiring, ephemeral thing, as if unconscious of natural beauty. Sylvan glades and fairy dales, where the brooks ripple pleasantly as they moisten the roots of the violet, and gently lave the feet of the lark and the robin; where shady trees bow welcome to the wanderer; where the grassy carpet is sprinkled with flowers, and every bush can tell of lovers' sighs! Does the impressionist see these things? Offer him the sweetest beauties of nature, and he shows you in return a shake of a kaleidoscope. Mountain peaks towering one above the other till their snowy crests sparkle the azure sky; mighty rivers dividing the hills, crumbling the granite cliffs, or thundering their course over impeding rocks; cascades of flowing crystal falling into seething seas of foam and mist; the angry ocean convulsively defying human power with its heaving walls and fearsome caverns! Nature in her grandest form: sublime forces which kindle the spirit of man: exhibit them to the impressionist, and he presents to you a flat experiment in the juxtaposition of pure colours! And the majesty of the human form, with its glorious attributes; the noble woman and courageous man; incidents of self-sacrifice; the realms of spiritual beauty, and the great ideals which expand the mind to the bounds of space and lift the soul to Heaven! What of these? Ask the impressionist, and he knows nothing of them. For his pencil they are but relics of the past, like the bones of the men who immortalized them in art.

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This is perhaps an overstatement of impressionism as applied to the works of a large number of artists, who although commonly sacrificing form to colour, infuse more or less interest in the human poses and actions which are nominally the subjects of their pictures. But one can only deal generally with such a matter. The evil of Impressionism does not lie in the presentation of colour harmonies as beautiful things, for they are

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unquestionably pleasing, though the beauty is purely sensorial and of an ephemeral character. The mischief arises from the declaration, overt or implied, that these harmonies represent the higher reaches of the painter's art, and that form or design therein is of secondary importance. Let something false in thought or activity be propagated in any domain where the trader can make use of it, then surely will the evil grow, each new weed being more rank than its predecessor. Impressionism is not a spurious form of art, but seeing that its spurious claims were widely accepted, with substantial results, there soon appeared innumerable other forms inferior to it. There is no necessity to deal here with these forms, with the crude experiments of Cézanne, the vagaries of Van Gogh,¹⁴ the puerilities of Matisse, or the awful sequence of "isms," commencing with "Post-Impressionism," and ending in the lowest depths of art degradation; but it is proper to point out that so long as Impressionism puts forward its extravagant pretensions, these corrupt forms will continue to taint the realm of art to the detriment of both artists and public.

The significance of Impressionism is alleged by its advocates to be of such considerable import that in the public interest they should have brought forward the most cogent arguments for its support. But we have no such arguments, nor has any logical reason been advanced to offset the obvious practical defects of the innovation, namely, that in the general opinion the art is incomplete and decidedly inferior, and that the leading critics of every country have ignored or directly condemned it as an immature form of art. Nevertheless, although there has been no determined attempt to upset the basis of art criticism as this basis has been understood for more than twenty centuries; although the whole of the arguments in support of the various forms of Impressionism have failed to indicate any comprehensible basis at all, but have dealt entirely with vague sensorial theories, and psychological suggestions which have no general meaning; although it has never been remotely advanced that the beauty produced by means of Impressionism is connected with intellectual activity, as any high form of art must necessarily be: notwithstanding all this, there has been gradually growing up in the public mind, a vague and uncertain signification of the comparative forms of art, which tends to the general confusion of thought amongst the public, and a chaos of ideas in the minds of young artists.

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The root of these spreading branches of mysticism is to be found in the insistent affirmation that the broad manner of painting is necessary for the production of great work, and that only those old masters who used this manner are worthy of study. It is, as if the advocates of the new departure declare, "If we cannot demonstrate the superiority of our work, we can at least affirm that our methods are the best." Where a small minority is persistent in advocating certain views, and the great majority do not trouble about replying thereto, false principles are likely to find considerable area for permeation among the rising generation, who are easily impressed with the appearance of undisputed authority. In the matter we are discussing, the limited authority is particularly likely to be recognized by the inexperienced of those mostly concerned, that is to say, young artists, because it sanctions a method of work which reduces to a minimum the labour involved in arriving at excellence by the regular channels.

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Now the artist is at liberty to use any method of painting in producing his picture providing he presents something beautiful. There is no special virtue in a broad manner, a fine manner, or any other manner, and the public, for whom the artist toils, is not concerned with the point. It is as indifferent to the kind of brushwork used by the painter, as to the variety of chisel handled by the sculptor. The observer of the picture judges it for its beauty, and if it be well painted, then the character of the brushwork is unconsidered. If, however, the brushwork is so broad that the manner of painting protrudes itself upon the observer at first sight, then the work cannot be of a high class. All the paintings which we recognize as great works of art are pictured upon the brain as complete things immediately they are brought within the compass of the eye, and to this rule there is no exception. If, when encompassed by the sight we find that a picture is so broadly painted that we must move backwards to an unknown point before the character of the work can be thoroughly comprehended as a complete whole, then it is distinctly inferior as a work of art, because, being incomprehensible on first inspection, it is necessarily unbeautiful, and the act of converting it into a thing of beauty, by means of a mechanical operation, complicates the picture on the brain and so weakens its æsthetic value.¹⁵ This is axiomatic. There are proportions and propriety in all the arts, and the good artist is quite aware of the lines to be drawn in respect of the manner he adopts. Jan Van Eyck's picture of Arnolfini and his Wife, and Holbein's Ambassadors, both painted in the fine manner, are equally great works of art with Titian's portraits; and Raphael's portrait of Julius II. (the Pitti Palace example),¹⁶ which is in a manner midway between that of Holbein and Titian, is superior to the work of all other portrait artists.

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But the most remarkable outcome of the spread of Impressionism is not the extravagant use of the broad manner, for vagaries of this sort will always find support among immature minds and undiligent hands, but the establishment of a species of cult connected with certain old masters who are not in the very first rank, and the attempted relegation to the background of public opinion, of the few sublime painters whose colossal genius and superiority are recognized by well balanced minds wherever the breath of man can open the door of his soul. It is unnecessary to enter upon a long enquiry as to the validity of these proceedings, but the new position in which two great masters have been placed can scarcely be ignored. These masters are Rembrandt and Velasquez, who appear to have been set upon the loftiest of pedestals in order that some of their glory may be shed upon the new varieties of Sprezzatura. It has been frequently said that these masters were the first of impressionists, but the connection between their work and Impressionism is hard to find.¹⁷ Not only is Rembrandt entirely distinct in his manner from Velasquez; not only were they both portrait painters primarily, while the great bulk of impressionist work is landscape; but their aims, their ideas, and the whole of their works are as far removed from the new school as the poles are asunder. The work of the two great painters deals almost entirely with expression, that of the impressionists with colour harmonies. In the one case intellectual beauty is sought to accompany the sensorial, in the other the production of beauty which is not purely or almost entirely sensorial, is not even pretended. While these differences are obvious, and while no man of ordinary intelligence is likely to be confused in his mind in respect of them, the fact remains that the movement, which was born with Impressionism some forty years ago, to raise Rembrandt and Velasquez to an elevation in art to which they are not entitled, has met with much success amongst that considerable section of the community which is interested in art and appreciates its value, but suffers from the delusion that special knowledge, which it has not acquired, is necessary for the recognition of high æsthetic merit. No definite propositions have been laid down in support of the movement: there has been no line of reasoning for the critic to handle, nor have the old standards been upset in the slightest degree: the position has been brought about chiefly by a continuous reiteration of vague assertions and mystic declarations, and by the glamour arising from the enormous prices paid by collectors for the works of the masters named, consequent upon the skilful commercial exploitation of this exaggerated approbation.

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PLATE 4



Venus Anadyomene
(Sculpture after the painting of Apelles)

(See page 113)

Venus Anadyomene
(Sculpture after the painting of Apelles)

(See [page 113](#))

PLATE 5



Venus Anadyomene
(*The painting of Titian*)

(See page 115)

Venus Anadyomene
(*The painting of Titian*)

(See [page 115](#))

Portraiture is necessarily on a lower scale of art than historical painting (using this term in its higher application), firstly because ideals are not possible therein, and secondly in that the imagination of the artist is very restricted. The greatest portrait ever painted is immeasurably below a picture where a beautiful ideal form, with ideal expression is depicted; as far below in fact as the best ancient sculptured busts were inferior to the gods of Praxiteles. Neither Rembrandt nor Velasquez was capable of idealization of form, and so neither left behind him a single painted figure to take its place as a type. Rembrandt was a master of human expression, and in the representation of character he was perhaps unsurpassed by any painter, but if we analyze the feeling that is at the bottom of the appreciation of his portraits, we find that it largely consists of something apart from admiration of them as things of beauty. There enters into consideration recognition of the extraordinary genius of the artist in presenting character in such a way that the want of corporeal beauty seems to be unfelt. Instead of observing that the expression in a countenance harmonizes with the features, we involuntarily notice that the features harmonize perfectly with the expression, which seems in itself to be the picture. Of course inasmuch as the expression invariably appeals to the good side of our nature, it means intellectual beauty, but as the depth of any impression of this kind of beauty depends upon the development of the mind, the admiration must, except where the artist presents corporeal beauty, be confined generally to the cultivated section of the community. From the point of view of pure art, his fame as a great painter can only rest upon those of his pictures which are also appreciated for the corporeal beauty exhibited.

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The extraordinary power of Velasquez lay in the sure freedom of his execution, and in this he was equal to Titian. He was besides a master of balance, and so every portrait he painted is one complete whole, and has exactly the effect that a portrait should have—to direct the mind of the observer to the subject, and away altogether from the painter. But these high qualities as portrait painters do not place Rembrandt and Velasquez on a level with Raphael, and Michelangelo, and Correggio. Whatever the individual opinion, it is impossible to move aside from the long path of experience and the laws dependent upon natural functions, and so long as the world lasts, a work of ideal beauty, whether it be a Madonna by Raphael, a Prophet by Michelangelo, or a symbolical figure by Fragonard, will live in general estimation, which is the only test of

high beauty, far above portraits from life and scenes of every day labour, however they may be painted. The beauty of the one is eternal and exalting; and of the other, sympathetic and more or less passive. The appreciation of Raphael and Michelangelo is universal, spontaneous, emphatic; of Rembrandt and Velasquez, sometimes imperative, but usually deliberative and cultivated. In fact it is only amongst a section of cultivated people, that is to say, a small percentage of the community, that Rembrandt and Velasquez are given a status which is not, and cannot be, accorded them if we adhere to the natural and time-honoured standards of judgment accepted by the first artists and philosophers known to the world since art emerged from the prehistoric shade. To place these artists above, or on a level with, the Italian artists named, is to cast from their pedestals Homer, Phidias, Praxiteles, Apelles, Shakespeare, Dante, and every other admittedly sublime genius in art of whom we have record.

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Another baneful result of Impressionism is the attempt to raise landscape to a higher level in art than that to which it is properly entitled. This is perhaps a natural consequence of the elevation of colour at the expense of form, for the movement is based upon new methods of colouring, and the significance of colour is vastly greater in landscape than in any other branch of art. Elsewhere the disabilities of the landscape painter are pointed out, and it will be seen that fixed and unalterable restrictions compel an extreme limitation to his work. It is because of these restrictions that the very greatest artists have refrained from paying close attention to this branch of art as a separate department.

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From indirect records we may presume that landscape painting was well understood in the days of ancient Greece, but there is no evidence that it then formed a separate branch of art. In Roman times according to Pliny, landscape was used for mural decoration. Of its character we can only judge from the examples exposed during the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, which indicate that the pictures had but a topographical interest, or formed settings for the representation of industrial pursuits or classical adventures. Certainly there is no instance in Greek or Roman art recorded or exhibited, of any landscape as we understand it, that is, a work built up as a beautiful representation of nature, to be instantly recognized by the observer as a complete whole, as one sign in fact. The artists of the Italian Renaissance did not paint landscapes as separate pictures unless by way of study or experiment. They evidently considered landscape signs purely as accessories, and composed their natural views with special reference to figure designs. Some of them, particularly the leaders of the Venetian School, occasionally painted pictures in which landscape appears to play an important part, but in these cases the landscape is really subsidiary, though essential to the design; and the works cannot be compared in any way with those of Claude and others who often added figures to their landscapes in order to comply with the wishes of their patrons. The fifteenth century Flemish artists also dealt with landscape purely as background, and so with Martin Schongauer, Dürer, and other early German painters. But all the great painters down to the decline of the Renaissance, closely studied landscape, as is evidenced by the numerous sketches still existing, and the finished pictures remaining clearly indicate that by the middle of the sixteenth century artists had little or nothing to learn in landscape art, save the management of complex aerial perspective.

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Since landscape painting was introduced as a separate art towards the end of the sixteenth century, it has only commanded general attention when the higher art of the painter has appeared to decline. In Flanders the spurt in landscape due to Paul Bril was terminated with the last of the Breughels by the overpowering splendour of Rubens in historical work, and the attempts of even Rubens himself to create a greater interest in landscape signally failed. There were some good landscape painters in Holland during the flourishing period of the Dutch school, but it was only when Rembrandt, Dow, Terburg, and the rest of the bright constellation of figure painters had passed their zenith, or were resting in quiet graves, that landscape painting became in any way general. Then it was that Hobbema, Jacob Ruysdael, and their numerous followers, with coast painters like Van der Cappelle, and sea painters as William van de Velde, turned out the many fine works which are now so highly prized.

The Italians of the seventeenth century were too close to Raphael, and Michelangelo, and Titian, to permit of a landscape being generally received as a great work of art, but there appeared at this time in Rome numerous foreigners from France, and Flanders, and Holland, who were devoted to landscape, and amongst them the greatest genius known in the art—Claude Lorraine. He was the first to put the sun in the sky on canvas for the purpose of pure landscape; the first to master thoroughly the intricate difficulties of aerial perspective; the first to adorn the earth with fairy castles and dreamy visions of nature, such as we might suppose to have been common in the days of the Golden Age, ere yet men fought for power, or toiled from morn to eve for daily bread. With his magic wand he skimmed the cream of natural beauty and spread it over the Roman Campagna, transforming this historic ground into a region of palaces, terraces, cascades, and glorious foliage. At the same time Nicholas Poussin was also using the Campagna for the landscape settings of his classical compositions—such perfect settings that it is impossible to imagine the figures separated from their surroundings. These two artists with their disciples, and many Flemish and Dutch painters headed by Berghem and the two Boths, formed a landscape colony of considerable importance, but no Italian landscape school was founded from it. In the next century there was little pure landscape in Italy. Some fine works of topographical, and a few of general interest were produced by Canaletto and his followers, and a kind of landscape school was maintained in Venice for half a century or more, but elsewhere in Italy the cultivation of landscape was spasmodic and feeble.

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In England and France, landscape as a separate art has only made considerable headway quite recently, though there have been local schools, as the Norwich and Barbizon, which followed particular methods in design. Meanwhile England produced some isolated giants in landscape, as Wilson, Gainsborough, Turner, and Constable, Turner standing out as the greatest painter of strong sun effects on record. It will be seen that until the last generation or so, in no country has landscape been admitted to high rank as a separate art, universal opinion very properly recognizing that the highest beauty in the handiwork of man is to be found in the representation of the human figure. Profound efforts of the imagination are not required in landscape, for it consists of a particular arrangement of inanimate signs which have no direct influence upon the mind, and cannot appeal to the higher faculties. There is no scope therein for lofty conceptions, and consequently the sensorial beauty exhibited must be very high to have more than a quickly passing effect upon the observer. This high beauty is most difficult to obtain, and can only be reached by those who have a supreme knowledge of the technique of their art; who have made a long and close study of natural signs and effects; and who are possessed of uncommon patience and industry. We need not be surprised that scarcely one out of every hundred landscape painters executes a work which lasts a generation, and not one out of a thousand secures a permanent place on the roll of art. The man who does not give his life from his youth up, to his work, concentrating his whole energy upon it, to the exclusion of everything else, will paint only inferior landscapes. The four greatest landscape painters known to us are Claude and Turner in distance work, and Hobbema and Jacob Ruysdael in near-ground. Claude was labouring for twenty-five years before he succeeded in

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accomplishing a single example of those lovely fairy abodes so forcibly described by Goethe as "absolute truth without a sign of reality." Turner took more than twenty years to master the secrets of Claude; Jacob Ruysdael spent a quarter of a century in working out to perfection the representation of flowing water, and Hobbema passed through more than half of his long life before arriving at his superlative scheme of increasing his available distance by throwing in a powerful sunlight from the back of his trees. And a long list of landscape painters of lesser lustre might be given, who went through from fifteen to thirty years of painstaking labour before executing a single first-class picture.

Great landscapes of the pure variety are of two kinds, and two kinds only. The highest are those where an illusion of opening distance or other movement is provided, and the second class are where natural scenes of common experience, under common conditions of atmosphere, are faithfully reproduced. The lighter landscapes representing phases, as the sketches of the Barbizon school,¹⁸ with the moonlight scenes, and the thousand and one sentimental colour harmonies unconcerned with human motives, which are turned out with such painful regularity every month, serve their purpose as wall decorations of the moment, but then die and fade from memory like so many of the unfortunate artists who drag their weary way to the grave in the vain struggle for fame by means of them.

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No landscape of the phase class can be anything more than a simple harmony of tone and design, more ephemeral than the natural phase itself. The quiet harmony is restful for the fatigued eye, and every eye is fatigued every day; and because the eye feels relieved in glancing at the picture, the conclusion arises to the unthinking that it must be a great work of art. Glowing eulogies were pronounced upon Whistler's Nocturne, in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, when it was first placed there, but is there anything less like a work of beauty than the dark meaningless patch as it is now seen? And the same thing has happened with a thousand other landscapes of the kind—first presented to the tired eyes of business and professional men, and then placed in collections to be surrounded by permanently beautiful works. All these phase pictures must quickly lose their beauty in accordance with natural laws which cannot be varied. Let it not be supposed that the writer means to suggest that these simple works should not be executed. They are surely better than no decoration at all in the many homes for which really fine pictures are unavailable, but it is entirely wrong to endeavour to pervert the public judgment by putting them forward as works of high art.

And what of the struggling artists? Look around in every city and see the numbers of bright young men and women wearing away the bloom of their youth in vain endeavours to climb the heights of art by the easy track of glowing colours! It is the call of Fame they think, that leads them along, for they know not the voice of the siren, and see not the gaping precipice which is to shatter their dreams. There is but one sure path to the top of the mountain, but it is drab-coloured, and many are the slippery crags. Few of the strongest spirits can climb it, but all may try, and at least they may direct their minds upwards, and keep ever in front of them a vision of the great idealists wandering over the summit through the eternal glow of the fires they lit ere death consecrated their glory.

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FOOTNOTES:

[a] See Chap. III.

[b] See Chap. IX.

[c] The varied interpretations of Impressionism are referred to elsewhere (see page). When using the term in this book without qualification, the writer means thereby the subordination of design to colour, which definition covers all the forms of the "new art" without going beyond any of them.

BOOK I

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CHAPTER I

Classification of the fine arts

The arts imitative of nature—The arts classified according to the character of their signs—Poetry not a compound art, primarily—The extent to which the arts may improve upon nature.

Since art uses natural signs for the purpose of representing nature, it is necessarily mimetic in character.¹⁹

Poetry represents all that the other arts imitate, and in addition, presumed divine actions. Specially it imitates human and presumed spiritual actions, with form and expression; expression directly, form indirectly.

Sculpture imitates human and presumed spiritual form and expression; form directly, expression indirectly. It also represents animal forms, and modifications of natural forms in ornament.

Painting imitates natural forms and products, and specially human form and expression; form directly, expression indirectly.

Fiction imitates human actions, and form and expression; expression directly, form indirectly.

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Music imitates natural sounds and combines them and specially represents human emotional effects.

Architecture is the least imitative of the arts, its freedom in the representation of nature being restricted by the necessity of serving the end of utility. It combines geometrical forms, and in the positions and proportions

of these, is compelled to represent what we understand from experience of nature as natural balance.

The poet may give to a character sublime attributes far above experience, or expand form as Homer raises the stature of Strife to the heavens, but he cannot provide attributes beyond experience in kind, or any part of a form outside of nature. He may combine or rearrange, and enlarge or diminish as he will, and so may the painter, the sculptor, or musician, but he is powerless to create signs unknown to nature. It follows then, that he who imitates nature in the most beautiful way, that is to say, he who combines the signs of nature to form the most beautiful whole, produces the greatest work of art.

It would appear that upon the character of their principal signs is dependent the relative position of the arts in respect of the recognition of beauty therein. Of the six fine arts, namely, Poetry, Sculpture, Painting, Fiction, Music, and Architecture, the first four, which hereafter in this work will be known as the Associated Arts, have for their principal sign the human figure, to which everything else is subordinate; while in music the signs consist of tones, and in architecture, of lines.

All the other arts whose object is to give pleasure, as the drama, dancing, etching, are either modifications of one of the fine arts, or combinations of two or more of them. In recent times it has been held that poetry is a combined art, owing to the almost invariable use of a simple form of music in its construction, but it would appear that primarily poetry is independent of metrical assistance. This was clearly laid down by Aristotle, but modern definitions of the art have usually included some reference to metre.²⁰ Now in our common experience two things are observable in respect of poetry. The first is, that when by way of admiration or criticism, we discuss the works of those poets whom all the world recognizes as the greatest known to us, we deal only with the substance of what is said, and the manner of saying it, without reference to the metrical form. In the second place we observe that the higher the poetry, the more simple is the metrical form with which it is associated. The great epics, which necessarily take first rank in poetry, have only metre, the higher musical measures in which lyrics are set being avoided. But as we descend in the scale of the art, metrical form becomes of more importance, and when simple subjects are dealt with, and a grand style is inappropriate, the production would not be called poetry unless in the form of verse.

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PLATE 6

PLATE 6



The Reposing Venus of Giorgione
(Dresden Gallery)

(See page 116)

The Reposing Venus of Giorgione (Dresden Gallery)

(See [page 116](#))

In epic and dramatic poetry, we call one poet greater than another because of his superior invention and beauty of expression, let the measure be what it will. But the invention comes first, for only high invention can be clothed with lofty expression. The actions of deathless gods or god-like men; qualities of goodness, nobility, courage, grandeur, so high as to be above human reach: only these can form the subject of language and sentiment soaring into regions of the sublime, and indifferent to metrical artifice. In the sacred books of all great religions we may find the loftiest poetry without regular form, and any prose translation of the Greek poets will provide many examples,²¹ though often there is a cadence—a rise and fall in the flow of words which is more or less regular, and has the effect of emphasizing the sentiment, and of throwing the images upon the mind with directness and force. We must conclude then that in poetry, while metrical form is generally essential, it is not vital to the highest flights of the poet, and so strictly, poetry is primarily a pure and not a compound art.

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Seeing that art uses the signs of nature of which man is at once a product and a tool, it must in its progress follow the general course of nature. In her development of life, nature is chiefly concerned in the improvements of types for her own purposes, and only uses the individual in so far as he can assist in this

end, while the natural instinct of the individual is to conserve and improve his type. The art which represents life is compelled to deal chiefly with types, for it is only by the use of a type that the artist can apply his imagination to the production of high beauty, to whatever extent he may use the individual to help him in this purpose, and it is instinctive in the human being to maintain and improve the æsthetic attraction of the species. The highest art, as the highest work of nature, consists of the presentation of a perfected type. The artist therefore must consider the species before the individual; the essential before the accidental; the general before the particular.

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The living signs of nature with which art deals are of two classes. In the one sign the position of parts is the same throughout the species, and is fixed and invariable, as in fully developed animals; in the other the position is irregular, and variable within limits, as in plants. In the latter case the position of parts may be commonly varied indefinitely without a sense of incongruity arising, as in a tree, and hence there can be no conceivable general form or type upon which art may build up perfected parts and proportions. In respect of such a sign therefore, art cannot improve, or appear to improve, upon nature, by combining perfected parts into a more beautiful whole than nature provides.

In the case of a fully developed animal, where the position of parts is fixed, a type may be conceived which is superior in symmetry and harmony to any individual of the species produced by nature, for the imagination is restricted to an unchangeable form, and has but to put together perfected parts and proportions. But this conception can only be applied in art to human beings, because in respect of other animals, while no two are alike, the members of each species, or each section of a species, seem to be alike, or so closely alike in form and expression, that no perfected type can be conceived which will appear to be superior in general beauty to the normal individual of the species, or section thereof, coming within actual experience. Thus, the most perfect conceivable racehorse painted on canvas, might in reality be more perfect in form than any actual racehorse, but to the observer of the picture it would not appear to be of greater perfection or higher beauty than racehorses that come, or may come, within experience. The poet may describe the actions and appearance of a courser in such a way as to suggest that the animal has qualities far above experience, but the form of the animal when thrown on the mind of the reader, would still appear to be within the bounds of experience.

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With the human being, in addition to the general form there enters into consideration the countenance, which is the all-important seat of beauty, is the principal key to expression, and which, to the common knowledge, differs in every person in character and proportions. Nature never produces a perfect form with a perfect countenance, and she actually refuses to provide a countenance which is free from elements connected with purely human instincts and passions. But it is within the power of art to correct the work of nature in these respects—to put together perfect parts, and to provide a general expression approaching our highest conceptions of human majesty. Homer, Phidias, and Raphael have enabled us to throw upon our minds images far above any of actual experience.

Apart from these ideal forms, nature cannot be surpassed by art in the production of beauty, either in respect of animate or inanimate signs, separately or collectively, the latter because within the limitations of art, there is no grouping or arrangement of signs possible which would not appear to correspond with what may be observed in nature, unless something abnormal and less beautiful than any natural combination be presented.

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Poetry, painting, and sculpture may be concerned with ideals. In fiction an ideal is impossible because the writer must treat of life as it is, or as it appears to be, within the bounds of experience. In neither music nor architecture is there a basic sign or combination of signs upon which the imagination may build up an ideal.

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CHAPTER II

LAW OF RECOGNITION IN THE ASSOCIATED ARTS

Explanation of the law—Its application to poetry—To sculpture—To painting—To fiction.

While we are unable to explain, logically and completely, our appreciation of what we understand as beauty, experience has taught us that there are certain phenomena connected with æsthetic perception which are so regular and undeviating in their application as to have all the force of law. The first and most important of these phenomena relates to the interval of time elapsing between the sense perception of a thing of art, and the recognition by the mind of the beauty therein.

We know from common experience of the Associated Arts that if one fails to appreciate a work almost immediately after comprehending its nature and purport, he arrives at the conclusion that there is no beauty therein, or at least that the beauty is so obscure as to be scarcely worth consideration. But sometimes on further acquaintance with the work the view of the observer may be changed, and he may become aware of a certain beauty which he did not before appreciate. We notice also that when the beauty is comparatively high, it is more rapidly recognized than when it is comparatively low. Continuing the examination we arrive at what is evidently an unalterable law, namely, that the higher the æsthetic value in a particular sphere of art, the more rapidly is the beauty therein recognized; that is to say, given any two works, other things being equal, that is the higher art the beauty in which is the more quickly conveyed to the mind of the observer after contact with it, and precisely to the extent to which the reasoning powers are required to be exercised in comprehending the work, so the beauty therein is diminished. The law may be called for convenience the Law of Recognition.

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But there are different kinds of beauty as well as degrees. One kind may be more quickly recognized, and yet make a weaker impression on the mind, a condition which is due to the varying relations between the sensorial and intellectual elements in the works. We note that in all the Associated Arts, as the works therein descend in æsthetic value, the emotional element becomes more evident, and consequently the impression received, less permanent. But sensorial beauty is the first essential in a work of art: hence while the direct appeal to the mind must be made as strong as possible, this must not be done at the expense of the emotional elements. We unconsciously measure the emotional with the intellectual effect, and if the former does not at least equal the latter, we reject the work as inferior art. A painted Madonna wanting in beauty of features is instantly and properly condemned even if her figure be enshrined within surroundings of saintly glories which

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in themselves make a powerful appeal to the mind. In fact the highest reaches in art were probably originally suggested by the necessity of balancing the one with the other form of beauty. The highest intellectual considerations seem to rise far above any emotional experiences connected with ordinary life, and hence to enable these considerations to enter the domain of art, the divine must be introduced so that the artist may extend his imaginative scope for the provision of emotional effects commensurate, as far as possible, with the importance of his appeal to the mind. Hence in all arts which combine an intellectual with an emotional appeal, the highest forms must ever be connected with the spiritual.

In other grades of these arts also, the artist has to use special means to maintain a due balance between the two kinds of beauty. Shakespeare could not give men and women of every-day experience the wisdom, the judgment, and the foresight necessary for the presentation of the powerful pictures which some of his characters throw upon the mind, so he raises them above the level of life by according them greater virtues and nobler passions than are to be found in people of actual experience. The supreme emotional effects he produces seem perfectly appropriate therefore to the intellectual appeals. In the next lower form of art, where the representation does not go beyond life experience, the emotional appeal is of still greater relative importance because the appeal to the mind is rarely striking. The emotional effect here may indeed be so overpowering that the purely mental considerations are lost sight of, and we observe that in all the greater works of art in the division, whether of poetry, painting, sculpture, or fiction, the intellectual appeal is vastly exceeded by the emotional. When we reach the grade which deals with subjects inferior to the average level of human life, as the representation of animals, landscape, humour, still-life, the sensorial effect must be exceedingly strong relatively, otherwise the art would scarcely be recognizable, the appeal to the mind being necessarily weak.

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It is clearly compulsory then that the Associated Arts, all of which may appeal to the mind as well as to the senses, should be separated into divisions for the purpose of applying the Law of Recognition, and these divisions are obvious, for they are marked by the strongest natural boundary lines. They are: 1. The art which deals with divinities. 2. That which exhibits beauty above life experience, but does not reach the divine. 3. That which represents life. 4. That which produces representations inferior to life. This separation corresponds with that applied by Aristotle to poetry and painting, except that he joined the two first sections into one, which he described as better than life. But the division of the great philosopher, while being sufficient for his purpose, is hardly close enough for the full consideration of the kinds of beauty, since it puts in the same class, representations of the divinity and the superman—joins Homer and Phidias with Praxiteles and Raphael. In dealing with the divine the artist need place no limit to his imagination in the presentation of his picture, whereas with the superman he must circumscribe his fancy within the limits of what may appear to the senses to be possibly natural. It is true that the poet may use the supernatural as distinguished from the divine, to enable him to extend his imaginative scope, and so give us beautiful pictures which would be otherwise unrepresentable. Shakespeare makes us imagine Puck encircling the earth in forty minutes, and Shelley shows us iron-winged beings climbing the wind, but we immediately recognize these pictures as figures of fancy, or as in the nature of allegory, and they do not impress us so deeply as the miraculous flight of a goddess of Homer, or an assemblage of the satellites of Satan in the Hell of Milton, for we involuntarily regard these events as compatible with the religious faith of great nations, and so as having a nearer apparent semblance of truth. Sacred art therefore, being capable of providing beauty of a much higher kind than any other form, should be placed in a separate section for the purpose of considering the law under discussion. Only poetry among the arts is capable of appropriately representing divine actions, and only sculpture of producing a form so perfect as to bring a divinity to mind. Hence these arts are alone concerned with the Law of Recognition as applied to the first section of the Associated Arts.

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The law applies to all the Associated Arts, and to all sections of them, except the lowest form of painting—that represented by harmony of colour without appeal to the mind of any kind—but this form is so weak and exceptional that it need hardly be considered in the general proposition. Indeed we might reasonably argue that it does not come within the fine arts, as it is produced by a mechanical arrangement of things with fixed and unalterable physical properties.

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The law cannot apply to music and architecture, for the effects of these are purely emotional, and so directly vary with conditions of time and place respectively. A work of architecture may seem more beautiful in one place than in another; and a work of music more or less beautiful according as it more or less synchronizes with emotional conditions of human activity surrounding the hearer at the time of the performance.

While this law is unvarying in the Associated Arts, there are artificial restrictions which must be considered in order that apparent deviations from it may be understood. Special restrictions in relation to the higher poetry and sculpture are mentioned later on, but there is also an important general restriction. The sense nerves and the imagination, like all other functions, must be exercised in order that normal healthy conditions may be retained; but a large section of the people, by force of circumstances or want of will, have neglected this exercise, and so through disuse or misuse these functions are often in a condition which is little more than rudimentary. Hence such persons are practically debarred from appreciation of many forms of art, and particularly those wherein intellectual beauty is a marked feature. In discussing the operation of this law amongst people in general therefore, the writer must be understood to refer only to that section of the community whose sense nerves and imaginations may be supposed to be in a healthy, active condition.

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Experience with all the Associated Arts has clearly demonstrated the validity of this law. The strength of the devices used by the poet lies in simplifying the presentation of his pictures. Metaphor is necessary to the poet, for without it he would be powerless to present pictures made up of a number of parts, but he also uses it for the purpose of throwing simple images upon the mind more rapidly, and consequently more forcibly, than would be possible if direct means were employed; and the beauty of the metaphor appears the greater according as it more completely fills in the picture which the poet is desirous of presenting. When other artifices than metaphor or simile are applied, the result only appears very beautiful when the condensation of the language used is extreme, and when there is no break in the delineation of the action. A few supreme examples of beauty derived from the principal devices of the poet for presenting his pictures may be instanced, and it will be found that in each case the power of the image is directly due to the brevity of expression, the simplicity of description and metaphor, or the unimpeded representation of action.

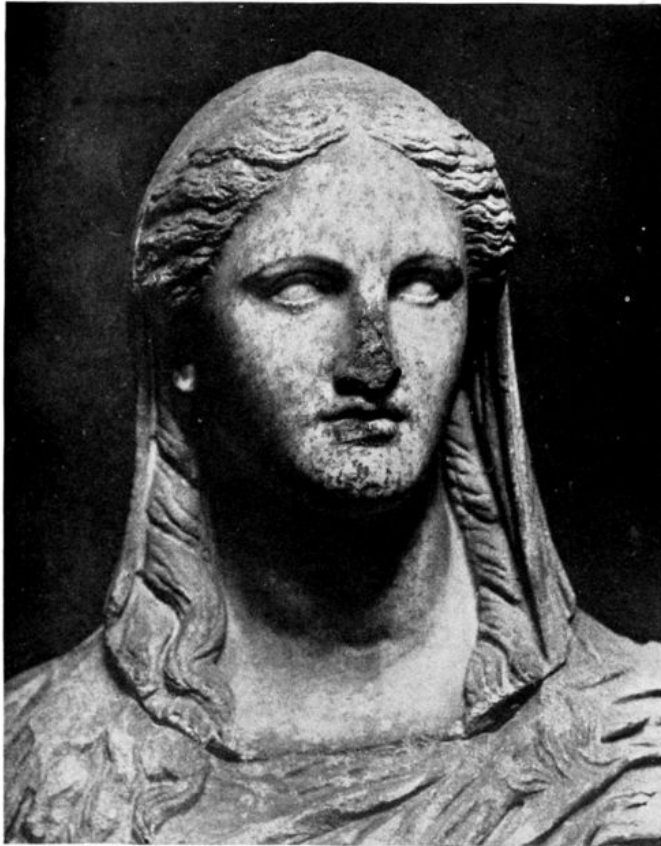
More than three thousand years have passed since the period assigned to Helen of Troy, and yet each generation of men and women as they learn of her, have deeply sealed upon their minds the impression that she was of surpassing beauty, almost beyond the reach of human conception. We have practically no details of her appearance from Homer or Hesiod, except that she was neat-ankled, white-armed, rich-haired, and had the sparkling eyes of the Graces, but already in the time of Hesiod her renown "spread over the earth." What

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was it then that established the eternal fame of her beauty? Simply a few words of Homer indicating the startling effect of her appearance before the elders of Troy. We are allowed to infer that these dry, shrunken-formed sages, shrill-voiced with age, became passionately disturbed by a mere glance at her figure, and nervously agreed with each other that little blame attached to the Greeks and Trojans for suffering such long and severe hardships on account of her, for only with the goddesses could she be compared. How wondrous must be the beauty when a glimpse of it suffices to hasten the blood through shrivelled veins, and provoke tempestuous currents to awake atrophied nerves! Without the record of this incident, the vague notices of Helen's appearance would be very far from sufficient to account for the universal recognition of her marvellous beauty.²²

PLATE 7

PLATE 7



Greek Sculpture, 4th Century B.C. Attributed to Scopas
Heads of Demeter



Greek Bronze, 3d Century B.C.
(See page 122)

**Greek Sculpture, 4th Century B.C. Attributed to Scopas
B.C.
Heads of Demeter**

Greek Bronze, 3d Century

(See [page 122](#))

One of the finest lines of Shakespeare is, "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank." The beauty of the line rests entirely upon the use of the word "sleeps" to express something which could not be otherwise said without the use of many words. The moonbeam is apparently perfectly still, the atmosphere calm, and there is nothing in the surroundings to disturb the natural tranquillity, these conditions inducing a feeling of softness and rest in the observer. If it had been necessary to say all this, Shakespeare would certainly have omitted reference to the moonlight, but his powerful imagination brings to mind the word "sleeps" to express the conditions, and we are overwhelmed with a beautiful picture suddenly thrown on the brain as if by a brilliant flash of light.

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Among the many illustrations of the point which may be found in the Bible, is the great passage, "And God said, 'Let there be Light,' and there was Light." This is described by Longinus as nobly expressed, but he does not suggest any cause for its æsthetic effect. It is true that nothing could be finer, but the nobility of the expression is derived from its brevity—from the extreme rapidity with which so vast and potent an event as an act of creation is pictured on the brain.²³ A description of an act of creation, although involving psychological considerations of sublimity, is not necessarily so beautiful in expression as to be a work of art.

In the case of lyric poetry, brevity of expression, though still of high importance, is not of so much moment as in epic or dramatic verse, because the substance is subordinated to beauty of expression and musical form. Devices are used chiefly for strengthening the sensorial element, the appeal to the mind being in most cases secondary. Nevertheless the lyric poet wastes no words. Take for example Sappho's *Ode to Anactoria*. The substance of these amazing lines is comparatively insignificant, being merely the expression of emotion on the part of an individual consequent upon disappointment, yet the transcendent beauty of the poem has held enthralled fourscore generations of men and women, and still the world gasps with astonishment at its perfection. Obviously the beauty of the ode rests mainly on qualities of form which cannot be reproduced in translation, but the substance may be, and it will be observed that the description of the action is unsurpassable. The picture, the whole picture, and nothing but the picture, is thrown on the mind rapidly and directly; so rapidly that the movement of the brush is scarcely discernible, and so simply that not a thought is required for its elucidation. With the chain of symptoms broken or less closely connected, the passion indicated would be comparatively feeble, whatever the force of the artifices in rhythm and expression which

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Sappho knew so well how to employ.²⁴

As with poetry, so with the arts of sculpture and painting: the greatest works result from simple designs. All the sculptures which we recognize as sublime or highly beautiful, consist of single figures, or in very rare cases, groups of two or three, and indeed it is difficult to hold in our minds a carved group of several figures. The images of the Zeus and Athena of Phidias, though we know little of them except from literary records and inferior copies, are far more brilliantly mirrored upon our minds than the Parthenon reliefs. The importance of simplicity is perhaps more readily seen in sculpture than in any other art, for the slightest fault in design has an immediate effect upon the mind of the observer. It is noticeable that the decadence of a great art period is usually first marked by complications in sculptured figures.²⁵

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In painting, the pictures which we regard as great are characterized by their simplicity, and the immediate recognition of their purport. They are either ideal figures, or groups where at least the central figure is idealized and commonly known. The work must be grasped at one glance for the beauty to be of a high order. Hence in the case of frescoes great artists have not attempted to make the beauty of any part dependent upon the comprehension of the whole. It is impossible for the eye to take in at a single glance the whole of a large fresco painting, and this explains why a fresco celebrated for its beauty is often disappointing to one who sees it for the first time, and endeavours to impress it on his mind as a single picture by rapidly piecing together the different parts.²⁶ Polygnotus could well paint forty scenes from Homer as mural decoration in one hall, for they could only be examined and understood as separate pictures; and the ceiling of Michelangelo at the Vatican is so arranged that there is no necessity for combining the parts in the mind. So with the Parma frescoes of Correggio. Raphael had a different task in his Vatican frescoes, but he accomplished it by arranging his figures so that each separate group is a beautiful picture; and Lionardo in his great work at Milan divided the Apostles into groups of three in order to minimize the consideration necessary for the appreciation of so large a work.

Fiction is divided into two sections, the novel and the short story, and they are so distinct in character that they must necessarily be considered separately in the application of the law under discussion. Form is of high importance in both classes of the art, but weighs more in the short story because here the appeal to the mind is unavoidably restricted. The novelist is capable of producing a higher beauty than is within the range of the short-story writer. The latter is limited in his delineation of character to the circumstances surrounding a single experience, while the novelist, in describing various experiences, may add shade upon shade in expression and thus elevate the characters and actions above the level possible of attainment by means of a single incident. But within his limit the short-story writer may provide his beauty more easily than the novelist, because a picture can be more readily freed from complications when away from surroundings, than when it forms one of a series of pictures which must have connecting links. A good short story consists of a single incident or experience in a life history. It is clearly cut, without introduction, and void of a conclusion which is not directly part of the incident. The subject is of general interest; the language simple, of common use, and free from mannerisms; while there are no accessories beyond those essential for the comprehension of the scheme. These conditions, which imply the most extreme simplicity, are present in all the greatest short stories known to us—the best works of the author of the *Contes Nouvelles*, of Sacchetti, Boccaccio, Margaret of Navarre, Hoffman, Poe, and De Maupassant. The novel differs from the short story in that it is a large section of a life with many experiences, but the principles under which the two varieties of fiction are built up, are precisely the same. Obviously the limit in length of a novel is that point beyond which the writer cannot enhance the beauty of character and action, while maintaining the unity of design. This means the concentration of effort in the direction of simplicity, facilitating the rapid reception of the pictures presented by the writer upon the mind of the reader.

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It is thus evident that the higher the beauty in the Associated Arts, the simpler are the signs or sign combinations which produce it; and hence the Law of Recognition rests on a secure foundation, for the simple must necessarily be recognized before the complex.

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CHAPTER III

LAW OF GENERAL ASSENT

General opinion the test of beauty in the Associated Arts.

The first aim of art is sensorial beauty, because sensorial experience must precede the impression of beauty upon the mind. The extent to which something appears to be sensorially harmonious depends upon the condition or character of the nerves conveying the impression of it to the brain. We know from experience that exercise of these nerves results in the removal or partial removal of natural irregularities therein, and enables a complex form of beauty to be recognized which was not before perceived. The vast majority of the people have not cultivated their sense nerves except involuntarily, and consequently can only recognize more or less simple beauty: thus, as the sign combinations become more complicated, so is diminished the number of persons capable of appreciating the beauty thereof.

The highest form of beauty conceivable to the imagination is that of the human being, because here corporeal and intellectual beauty may be combined. This is universally admitted and has been so since the first records of mental activity. The human figure must be regarded as a single sign since the relation of its parts to each other is fixed and invariable; and further it is the simplest, because of all signs none is so quickly recognized by the rudimentary understanding. In the Associated Arts therefore, the highest beauty is to be found in the simplest sign, and this is the one supremely important sign in these arts, for without it only the lowest forms may be produced.

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From all this we determine that the higher the beauty in a work of the Associated Arts, the larger is the number of persons capable of recognizing it; so that if we say that something in these arts is beautiful because it pleases, we imply that it is still more beautiful if we say that it generally pleases, and the highest of all standards of beauty is involved in the interpretation of Longinus: "That is sublime and beautiful which always pleases, and takes equally with all sorts of men." Thus, in the Associated Arts, the general opinion as to the æsthetic value of a work of high art is both demonstration and law.²⁷

In music the significance of the signs is inverted compared with the progression in the Associated Arts, for

while in the latter the highest form of beauty is produced by the simplest of single signs, in music the higher forms are the result of complex combinations of signs. The greatest musical compositions consist of an immense variety of signs arranged in a hitherto unknown order. Thus, while the immature or uncultivated mind recognizes the higher forms of beauty before the lower in the Associated Arts, it first recognizes the lower forms in music. In the Associated Arts therefore, cultivation results in the further appreciation of the forms of art as they descend, and in music as they ascend.

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In painting, the most uncultivated persons, even those who have never exercised their organs of sight except involuntarily, will always admire the higher forms before the lower.²⁸ They will more highly appreciate a picture of a Madonna or other beautiful woman than an interior where the scene is comparatively complicated by the presence of several persons, and they will prefer the interior to a landscape, and a landscape to a still-life picture. So in sculpture. Other things being equal, a figure of a man or woman will be preferred to a group, and the group to an animal or decorative ornament. An exception must however be made in respect of the sublime reaches of Grecian sculpture in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., owing to an artificial restriction. There is very little of this sculpture to be actually seen, nearly all the more important works being known only from records or variable copies. Considerable observation, comparison, and study, are necessary before one can gain a fair conception of the Grecian ideals, and so they are practically lost to the bulk of the people.

In fiction it is common knowledge that the greatest works from the point of view of art are always the most popular, as they are invariably the most simple in construction and diction. In considering poetry we must exclude the great epics, as those of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton, because where the actions of supernatural persons are described, the sentiments and language employed are so elevated in character, and the images and literary references so numerous, that a certain superior education is required before the sense of the poems can be comprehended. Subject to this artificial restriction, the rule holds entirely good. Shakespeare is at once the greatest and most popular of our poets: Shelley, Byron, and Burns, are as far ahead of Tennyson and Browning in popularity as they are in general beauty and simplicity.

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In music on the other hand the lower forms are the simplest and consequently the most popular. Songs, dance measures, and ditties of various kinds, are enjoyed by the mass of the people in preference to Beethoven and Wagner, a certain cultivation of the aural nerves being necessary for the appreciation of the greater artists. The architect is under the necessity of meeting the ends of utility, but subject to this restriction it is obvious that simplicity must be the keynote to his design, for the highest quality of beauty in his power to produce is grandeur, and this diminishes with an increase in the complexity of his sign combinations. The combination of simplicity with grandeur is the first form of beauty that would be recognized by the immature eye, and consequently in respect of the general test of art excellence, architecture falls into line with the Associated Arts, and not with music.

From what has been said it will be understood how it is that in the Associated Arts opinion as to the æsthetic value of particular works begins to differ as soon as we leave the recognized masterpieces of the first rank, and why the divergence widens with every step downwards. As the character of the art is lowered so is diminished the number of persons capable of appreciating it. In painting and sculpture this diminution is direct with the increased complexity of the signs used, and indirect according as the character of the signs weakens. In poetry the same rule applies generally, but in the lower forms alliance with the art of music may bring about a variation. Only the very lowest forms of music may be used with the higher forms of poetry because the poet must have the minimum of restriction when dealing with the character and actions of the personages who constitute the principal signs in his work, but as the art descends the musical form becomes of more importance, and the substance more simple. Hence the sensorial beauty of a lyric may be appreciated more quickly than that of a poem which is, in substance, of a much higher order, though the kind of beauty recognized will differ in the two cases. But even in the greatest lyric the musical form is comparatively very simple, its beauty being recognized without special cultivation of the aural nerves: thus, subject to the division of poetry into its natural grades—the two sections where substance and form respectively predominate—the measure of its beauty is the extent to which it is generally appreciated. None of the other Associated Arts may be allied with a second art without crippling it as a fine art, because of the extraordinary limitations forced upon the artist by the alliance; and hence in respect of sculpture, painting, and fiction, there is no exception to the rule that the beauty capable of being produced diminishes strictly with an increase in the complexity of the signs used.

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These facts appear sufficiently to establish what may be called the Law of General Assent in the Associated Arts; that is to say, in the arts of poetry, sculpture, painting, and fiction, the supreme test of the æsthetic value of a work, is general opinion; and a corollary of this is that the smaller the number of persons to whom a work of one of these arts appeals, the weaker is the art therein.

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CHAPTER IV

LIMITATIONS OF THE ASSOCIATED ARTS

The production of beauty in the respective arts—How they differ in scope.

The Associated Arts have all the same method of producing beauty: they throw pictures on the brain.²⁹ Sensorial or intellectual beauty, or both together, may be exhibited, but in the arts of the painter and sculptor the picture is transferred to the brain through the optic nerves, and is necessarily presented before the intellect can be brought to bear upon the impression. The arts of the poet and the story writer involve the presentation of a picture representing the complete composition, and in addition when the work is lengthy, of a series of pictures each of which strengthens the relief of the general design. The painter and sculptor each presents a complete picture, the meaning of which is immediately determined through the sense of sight, and the extent of the beauty is bounded by what can be recognized by this sense. All the signs necessary to perfect the composition are simultaneously indicated, the artist exhibiting at one blow a full description of what makes up his thing of beauty. But the poet cannot so produce a picture because he presents the parts successively and not simultaneously, and in the most important of all the forms which he represents—that of the human countenance—both beauty and expression have to be defined, and the separate elements are indescribable. Consequently, however, we may combine the features of a countenance as described by the

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poet, we cannot throw a picture of the whole upon our minds. A particular form of beauty must be presented to the eye before it can be mentally pictured. The poet therefore does not attempt to dovetail his picture of the human form with descriptive details, but relies upon imagery, suggestion, or other artifice, to indicate his meaning in the most rapid way possible.³⁰ The novelist is in the same position as the poet in this respect, except that some of the devices of the latter are denied him.

But although the poet or novelist cannot put together the parts in his description, he may in certain cases present natural beauty to the mind, his scope depending upon the nature of the parts and the extent to which they depend upon each other for the completion of the picture. Where the beauty of the whole rests upon a combination of perfected parts of form only, as in the case of a horse, then the poet is able to present beauty of form notwithstanding that the separate parts are in themselves not beautiful, though the beauty would be that of the type and not of the individual. The beauty of a horse depends upon its possession of a collection of features which have each a particular significance. If we are able to recognize from a description that a horse has qualities of form and action indicating speed, high spirits, proud bearing, and so on, and at the same time has a harmonious symmetry in its general outline, a beautiful animal is thrown on the mind without difficulty. We readily picture the courser described by Shakespeare in his *Venus and Adonis* as a beautiful horse, but we should not be able to differentiate it from the courser of Mazeppa. Where the parts of the thing described are in themselves beautiful, then the poet may successfully throw on the mind a series of pictures of æsthetic interest. Thus, he may call to the imagination parts of a landscape which are in themselves beautiful scenes, as for instance a deep gorge opening on to a lake, or a flowery valley, though the parts could not be put together on the mind so that the beauty of the whole may be presented.³¹

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PLATE 8

PLATE 8



Raphael's Sistine Madonna, with the Face of the Central Figure in Fragonard's "The Pursuit" Substituted for that of the Virgin (See page 139)

Raphael's Sistine Madonna, with the Face of the Central Figure in Fragonard's "The Pursuit" Substituted for that of the Virgin

(See [page 139](#))

Summing up the limits of the Associated Arts in the presentation of the two kinds of beauty, the poet and the novelist can present general or particular beauty of mind, and general sensorial beauty, but are powerless with particular sensorial beauty; the sculptor and painter may present general or particular sensorial beauty,

and general, but not particular, beauty of mind. Particular sensorial beauty may be suggested by the poet or novelist, by indicating its emotional effect, or by symbols in the form of metaphor; and particular intellectual beauty may be suggested by the sculptor or painter by representing the effect in expression of a particular action, or by symbols in the form of human figures of beauty.

But while the poet cannot throw upon the brain a particular form of human beauty, he may suggest a greater beauty than that which the painter or sculptor can depict, and further produce emotional effects relating to spiritual and human actions and passions which are beyond the plastic arts: hence his art is capable of the highest reaches. Next to him come the sculptor and painter, for they may represent ideal forms which must be excluded from fiction. Theoretically, painting and sculpture are equal in respect of the production of human beauty, for there is no form designed by the one which may not be presented by the other; but practically the painter cannot attain to the height of the sculptor in the representation of ideal beauty.^[a]

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The sculptor and painter are at a disadvantage compared with the poet and novelist, for the limitation of their arts compels them to confine their imaginations to structural work. Each of the Associated Arts consists nominally of three parts: (a) the scheme, or idea, or fable; (b) the design or invention³²; (c) the execution. In a representation of action, the painter or sculptor can only depict a particular moment of it, neither the beginning nor the end being visible. He must therefore choose an action of which the beginning and end are known, for while either may be suggested in a simple design, both cannot be implied so that the whole story is obvious. He has consequently to take his moment of action from a fact or fable in one of the literary arts, or from actual life experience.³³ Where no particular action is indicated, as in many pastoral and interior scenes in painting, or ornamental figures in sculpture, the conception and invention are one. Thus, the painter or sculptor is confined to only two parts of his art, the design and execution. While therefore the scope of the poet and novelist is as unlimited as the sea of human motives and passions, that of the painter and sculptor is held within strictly marked bounds.

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All the Associated Arts are alike in that they cannot be specially used for moral or social purposes without suffering a marked deterioration. This is because of the limitations imposed upon the artist. His wings are clipped: his imagination is confined within a narrow groove: he is converted from a master to a slave. Hence no great work of one of these arts has been produced where the conception of the artist was bound by the necessity of pointing a moral, or of conforming to some idea of utility.³⁴

FOOTNOTES:

[a] See Chapter IX.

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CHAPTER V

DEGREES OF BEAUTY IN THE PAINTER'S ART

The degrees of beauty which the art of the painter can exhibit appear to be, in order of their value, as follows:

1. That which appeals to the senses with form, and to the mind with expression, above the possibility of life experience. This double beauty can only be found in ideals, and the real cannot be associated with it except as accessory. The highest art of the painter is therefore confined to sacred, mythological, and symbolical subjects.

2. That which appeals to the senses through representation of the human form, without, or with only partial idealization, and to the mind through the indication in expression of high abstract qualities. This section comprises subjects of profane history, and high class portraiture. It varies from the succeeding section in that the artist may represent the human being as he ought to be, or would be with the higher physical and abstract qualities emphasized, or in certain cases, with these qualities added.

3. That which appeals to the senses through the harmony of tone and design, and to the mind through the representation of human action within the compass of life experience. This section comprises interiors and exteriors relating to daily life and labour, and portraiture which is merely accurate imitation of features. It differs from the previous section in that it represents the human being as he is, and not as he ought to be.

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4. That which appeals to the senses through harmony of colour and design, in respect of the imitation and the things imitated, in addition to pleasing because it excites admiration of the skill in imitation. This section comprises landscape, flowers, fine plumaged birds, and certain symmetrical animal forms.

5. That which appeals to the senses through harmony of tone and design, and indirectly to the mind through association of ideas connected with the other arts; in addition to pleasing because of the excellent imitation, and possibly because of the beauty of the things imitated. This section comprises paintings of things connected with the other arts, and which are neither beautiful nor displeasing, such as books and musical instruments; or which are imitations of products of another art, as plate, marble reliefs, or architectural forms.

6. That which appeals to the senses through harmony of tone and design, in addition to pleasing because of the excellent imitation. This class of beauty comprises paintings of objects which in themselves are not beautiful, as vegetables, kitchen utensils, and certain animals; or which are even repellent, as dead animals.

7. That which appeals to the senses through harmony of colour, the design having no beauty in itself. This form of art, which is the lowest in the scale of the painter, is only adapted for the simplest formal decoration.

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The first three sections may produce both sensorial and intellectual beauty; the others only sensorial. Limited abstract qualities are associated with certain animals in nature, but cannot be indicated in the uncombined art of the painter.

Beyond these sections, there are classes of pictures which do not belong to the pure art of the painter, namely, those executed for use and not for beauty³⁵; those painted to illustrate sports, or to record passing events; certain allegorical paintings; and those works which, while they cannot represent the ideal, require the assistance of another art for their interpretation; as for instance, incidents to illustrate particular morals or stories; scenes from the drama other than tragedy; portraits of persons in character; humorous subjects, and so on. Such works, on account of the restrictions imposed on the artist, can exhibit but limited and fleeting beauty. Elsewhere they are noticed under the heading of "Secondary Art."

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CHAPTER VI

EXPRESSION. PART I.—THE IDEAL

The human being is the only sign in the arts capable of idealization, because, while its parts are fixed and invariable, it is the only sign as to which there is a universal agreement in respect of the value of abstract qualities connected with it. There can be no ideal of the human form separately, because this implies expression which results from abstract qualities. Nor can there be an ideal combination of these qualities, except a general expression covering all the virtues and eliminating all the passions, which expression cannot be disassociated from form. The ideal human being is therefore a perfect generalization of the highest conceivable qualities of form and expression.

Necessarily in matters of art, when we use the term "Ideal," we mean a general ideal, that is to say, an ideal that would be accepted as such by the general body of men and women. From the fact that the sensorial nerves in all persons are alike in form and character, and that they act in the same way under like conditions, it follows that there must be a general agreement as to degrees of beauty, and thus a common conception of the ideal human being. Experience has demonstrated this at all times, both in respect of the general ideal we are now discussing, and of particular ideals involving special types and characters; and so invariable is this experience that the progression towards similar ideals has all the force of law.³⁶ This general agreement is subject to certain restrictions. The first is in regard to form in which the imagination cannot proceed beyond experience. The component parts of an ideal form cannot include any which are higher in quality than those which have come within the experience of the person compounding the ideal. Secondly, in regard to abstract qualities, the estimation of these depends upon intelligence and education, and the accumulated experience of these things, which we measure in terms of degrees of civilization. Consequently, different interpretations would be placed upon the phrase "the highest conceivable qualities of form and expression," by the various races of mankind. According as the experience was greater, so would the ideal form be higher in type; and as the civilization was more advanced, so would the abstract qualities exhibited be more perfect in character. But among civilized peoples what is, within our understanding, the ultimate form of the ideal, would not change in respect of abstract qualities, and as to form would only vary in comparatively insignificant details with the width of experience.

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It is obvious that there can be only one general ideal covering perfection of form and mind, and this being beyond human experience, can only be associated with a spiritual personage, and necessarily with the highest conceivable spiritual personage—the Supreme Being. In its absolute perfection it may be significant of the Supreme Being of any religion of civilized peoples, but not of other spiritual personages to whom such perfection may also be attributed, because absolute power can only be implied in one such personage. This power cannot be indicated in an ideal expression, and hence there is no alternative but to leave the one general ideal to the Supreme Being.

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There are only two religions in which an ideal human form has been used in art to typify the Supreme Being, and these are the ancient Grecian and the Christian; but the one general ideal referred to has only been used by the Greeks. The Christian conception of the Deity is far nobler than that which the Greeks had of Zeus, but in art nothing greater than the Grecian ideal has been executed. As a type of an Almighty Power the best Christian representation is distinctly inferior, and it must necessarily be so because convention requires that a particular feature of expression must be indicated therein which is not compulsory in the Grecian ideal. Forgiveness of sins is a cardinal principle in the Christian doctrine, and consequently whatever the character of expression given to the Deity, a certain gentleness has to be exhibited which materially limits the comprehensive nature of the expression. The Grecian ideal, as sculptured, strictly denied any particular characteristic, while covering every good quality, and hence for the Christian it is not so suitable as the accepted modification.

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Among the Greeks, ideal types of the gods and goddesses other than Zeus varied considerably. Those representations that have come down to us are usually deviations from the Zeus type with certain special characteristics, though often they can only be distinguished from each other by symbols. They are above human life and so cannot be appropriately associated with human surroundings. Ideals appertaining to Christianity are practically fixed by convention, or are interchangeable with ideals in allegorical and symbolical art.

Art is not concerned with what are termed ideal physical qualities because beauty is its first consideration. A form with powerful limbs and muscles may be generally accepted as an ideal form of strength, but these very limbs and muscles would detract from the beauty of the figure, and so separately such a form would be inferior art.

An ideal can only be applied to excellence. In art, moral or physical deformity cannot be exaggerated for the purpose of emphasis or contrast without lessening the deformity or injuring the art. In the work of the greater artists the former result follows; in that of less skilful artists, the latter. Homer could not deal with evil characters without exciting a certain sympathy with them, thus diminishing the deformity in the minds of his readers. There is a measure of nobility about Shakespeare's bad men, and Milton distinctly ennobled Satan in portraying his evil powers and influence. In painting and sculpture there is no place for hideous forms of any description, for they either revolt the imagination and so neutralize the appreciation of the beautiful figures present in the composition, or they verge upon the ridiculous and disturb the mind with counteracting influences. With rare exceptions the greater artists have not failed to recognize this truth,³⁷ and in respect of the very greatest men, no really hideous figure is to be found in any of their works, if we except certain instances where the artist had to comply with fixed rules and conditions, as for example in Michelangelo's Last Judgment where evil beings had perforce to be presented, and could only be shown as deformities.

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Attempts to emphasize ugliness by artists of inferior rank result in the fantastic or the ludicrous, as in the representation of evil spirits on the old Etruscan tombs, and the whimsical imps of the Breughels and the younger Teniers.

CHAPTER VII

EXPRESSION. PART II.—CHRISTIAN IDEALS

The Deity—Christ—The Madonna—The Madonna and Child.

In considering the scope for the exhibition of ideals in art, it should be remembered that ideal types of some of the principal personages in religious and mythological history have been already fixed by great artists, and it is impossible to depart from them without producing what would appear to be abnormal representations. Homer led the way with occasional hints of the presumed physical appearance of some of the leading deities of Greece, and except in the case of Aphrodite the later Grecian sculptors closely followed him. The Zeus of Homer as improved by Phidias has been the model of this deity in respect of form for nearly every succeeding sculptor to this day, while it was also the model which suggested the Christian Father as represented by the first artists of the Renaissance, though, as already indicated, the majestic dignity of the Phidian Zeus was partly sacrificed by the Christian artists. Phidias in fact created a type which, so far as human foresight can judge, must ever guide the artistic mind, whether portraying the mighty son of Kronos, or the God of the Christians. Only very rarely nowadays is the Christian Deity pictured in art, and as time goes on His introduction in human shape in a painting will become still more rare in conformity with changing religious ideas and practices; but now and hereafter any artist who contemplates the representation, must, voluntarily or involuntarily, turn to the frescoes of Raphael and Michelangelo for his guide.

PLATE 9

PLATE 9



Raphael's Virgin of the Rose with the Face of "Profane Love" in Titian's Picture
Substituted for that of the Virgin (See page 138)

Raphael's Virgin of the Rose with the Face of "Profane Love" in

There is no tradition upon which to base an actual portrait of Christ. For the first four centuries A.D., when He was represented in art, it was usually by means of symbols, or as a young man without beard, but there are some Roman relics of the fifth century remaining in which He is depicted much in the later generally accepted type, with short beard and flowing hair. During the long centuries of the Dark Age, when religious art was practically confined to the Byzantine Greeks, Christ was almost invariably portrayed with a long face and emaciated features and limbs, as the epitome of sadness and sorrow. This expression was modified as the arts travelled to the north and west of Europe, and gradually His face began to assume more regularity and beauty. Then came Cimabue to sow the seed of the Renaissance, and with him the ideal of Christ was changed to a perfect man of flesh and blood. A century or more was occupied in establishing this ideal, but it was so established, and has maintained its position to this day.³⁸

This ideal represents the Saviour as a man of about thirty-three years—His age at the Crucifixion. He wears flowing hair with a short beard and usually a moustache. His face is rather long, often oval; the features have a perfect regularity, and the expression is commonly one of patient resignation. Naturally His body must appear well nourished, otherwise corporeal beauty cannot be expressed. This is the type which has been used since the height of the Renaissance, though there have been a few exceptional representations. Thus, the face of Christ in Lionardo's Last Supper at Milan is that of a beardless young man of some twenty-five years^[a] and Raphael in an early picture shows Him beardless, but gives Him an age of about thirty.^[b] Some early Flemish artists also rendered Him beardless at times, notably the Maitre de Flémalle, Van der Weyden, and Quentin Matsys. Michelangelo in his Last Judgment represents the Saviour sitting in judgment as a robust, stern, commanding figure, beardless, and with an expression and bearing apparently serving the idea of Justice.^[c] Strange to say the artist gives a very similar face to St. Stephen in the same series of frescoes. A still more unusual representation is that of Francisco di Giorgio, who gives Christ the appearance of an Apollo,^[d] while Bramantino depicts His face worn with heavy lines.^[e] In one picture Marco Basaiti shows Him as a young man with long hair but without beard, and in another with a thick beard without moustache.^[f] There was considerable variation in the type among the Venetians of the sixteenth century, but not in important features, and since then very few artists indeed have ventured to depart from the ideal above described. The only notable exception in recent times is in a work by Burne-Jones who represents Christ as a beardless youth, though indicating the wound to St. Thomas.^[g] It is supposed that the artist presumed that the Person of Christ underwent a complete change after the Resurrection.

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It is evident that the ideal Christ as established by the Italians can scarcely be improved upon in art within the prescribed limitations. Christ having lived as an actual man, His representation must be within the bounds of possible experience; and since He died at the age of thirty-three, intellectual power cannot be suggested in His countenance, for this in life means an expression implying large experience warranted only by mature age. The representation is therefore confined to that of a man who, while exhibiting a healthy regularity of form and feature, has lost all sense of earthly pleasure. The beauty achieved by this type is negative, the only marked quality being a suggestion of sadness which, in painting, is necessarily present in all expression where an unconcern with human instincts and passions is depicted. The Italians in their representation of Christ were thus unable to reach the height of the Greek divine portrayals. They were confined to earth, while the Greek figures were symbols of spiritual forms which were pure products of the imagination. Giotto and his successors sought a physically perfect man with all purely human features in expression eliminated. The Greeks, even when representing divinities below Zeus, generalized all human attributes, excluding nothing but the exceptional. They embodied in their forms, truths acknowledged by the whole world; summed up human life to the contentment of all men: there was nothing in their divinities which would prevent their acceptance as spiritual symbols in all religions of civilized peoples. To them human instincts were sacred: all human passions could be ennobled: everything in the natural progression of life came within the purview, and under the protection, of the gods. So the course of their art was definite: there was never a difference as to the goal, for it was universal.

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From the point of view of the development of art the ideal Christ has been of little importance compared with the ideal Madonna, though here also the Italians aimed for a particular instead of a general type. They wanted a living woman with the form and features of a pulsating mother; a woman of ordinary life in fact, but infinitely superior in physical beauty, and endowed with the highest grace that their imaginations could conceive and their hands execute. This ideal seemed to germinate with Cimabue, but an immense advance upon him was made by Giotto who was unsurpassed in the representation of the Holy Mother for more than a century. But the ideal was yet purely formal and continued so till past the middle of the fifteenth century, both in Italy and Flanders. Giotto was then excelled by many artists, but the Madonnas they produced, though often very beautiful, are not humanly attractive. They are on the side of the Angels; have never been women evidently, and are far, far away from the human type with tingling veins and heaving breath. Filippo Lippi marked the border line between this type of Madonna, and the advanced pattern produced by the series of great artists of the latter part of the fifteenth century. But with Lionardo, Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, and the rest, the Madonna was scarcely an ideal woman. Living persons were commonly taken as models, and although the portraits were no doubt "improved," they have little connection with the ideal which the artists evidently had in mind. The very life which the artist transfers to canvas in a portrait is destructive of the ideal, for it is a particular life with evidence of particular emotions and passions from which the Madonna should be free.

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A mighty barrier must be passed before a woman is translated on canvas into the type of Madonna sought by the first Renaissance artists. She must be a woman of the earth; a woman who has grown up amidst human surroundings from infancy to girlhood, and from girlhood to womanhood; with human aspirations and sympathies, and experience of joys and trials: she must have all these, and as well have become a mother; and yet with human beauty, her countenance must be such that by no stretch of the imagination can the possibility of desire be suggested. This was the problem, and certainly only a genius of the highest order could arrive at a solution, for the task appears on the face of it to be almost superhuman. But Raphael succeeded in accomplishing it, and his achievement will stand for all time as one of the greatest epoch-making events in history. Even Michelangelo, who created so many superb forms, never succeeded with an ideal suitable for a Madonna.³⁹

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It is clear that in reaching for his ideal, Raphael did not strive for an expression relating to the spiritual. His purpose was to eliminate from the features anything which might possibly be construed as indicating earthly desires, and yet retain the highest conceivable human beauty. With this double object contentment is a

quality in expression which is indispensable, and this Raphael was careful to give, sometimes emphasizing it with a suggestion of happiness. It is not possible to go further with an expression which is to generalize the highest human physical and abstract qualities, while keeping the figure within the range of apparent feasible realization in life. The result was ideal but not exclusive. It is a universal type, and is suited to the Madonna because there is nothing humanly higher within our comprehension; but it has a further general import which is dealt with elsewhere.

Although the aim achieved by Raphael must necessarily be the goal of all artists in the representation of the Madonna, it is of course not essential that he should be accepted as the only guide to her form. Her features may vary indefinitely so long as the ideal is maintained, and Raphael himself painted no two Madonnas with the same features. But certain traditions must be observed, however much one may depart from the actual circumstances of her life. The first is in respect of her presumed age. In pictures dealing with her life soon after marriage, as for instance, the Nativity and the Flight into Egypt, the Madonna is invariably represented as many years older than she appears in Annunciation subjects, though only a year or so actually passed between the respective events. The reason for this is obvious. She must be shown with the bloom of a matured woman. The highest form of nobility cannot be disassociated from wisdom and experience, which could not be indicated in the countenance of a girl in her teens. Innocence and purity may be present, and a certain majesty even, but our conception of the Madonna as a woman involves the triumph over known evils, the full knowledge of right and wrong, and the consciousness of a supreme position above the possibility of sin. Hence in all representations of the Madonna at the Nativity and afterwards, she must be shown at an age suggesting the fullest knowledge of good and evil.

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While, between the Annunciation and incidents occurring during the infancy of Christ, many years must be presumed to have passed, from this latter period on, the Madonna must be supposed to have aged very little, if at all, right up to the Crucifixion. It is not often that we find her included in a design illustrating the life of Christ between His infancy and the Death Scene, a fact probably due to the age difficulty. In the exceptions her face is often partly or wholly hidden. But in scenes of the Crucifixion, where the Virgin is almost invariably introduced, artists of all periods, with few exceptions, have been careful to avoid suggesting the full presumed age. Commonly the age indicated is between twenty-five and thirty years, but as the face is always pale, and often somewhat drawn, her comparatively youthful appearance is not conspicuous. Obviously under no circumstances should lines be present in the features, for this would suggest a physical decay not in conformity with Christian ideas.⁴⁰ Even in pictures relating to her death, which is presumed to have occurred at an age between fifty and sixty years, her face is shown with perfectly regular and smooth features, though an extreme pallor may be painted. But from the point of view of art, the Virgin must be regarded as an accessory in works relating to the Crucifixion, for to throw her into prominence would result in dividing the attention of the observer of the picture on first inspection, and so lessening the art. In any case she must be painted with an expression of grief, and hence an unalloyed ideal of transcendent beauty is out of the question.

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The custom of representing the Madonna in costume and surroundings indicating a higher social level than that in which she actually moved, is now firmly established, and cannot be departed from without lowering the ideal. A woman in a lowly position of life, who is compelled to bear all the responsibilities of a home, with the care of a husband and child, is seldom seen except in the performance of household duties. We cannot see her without associating her in our minds with toil and possible privation, and we naturally expect that the effect of these will be indicated in her expression and general bearing. If away from her home her costume would usually declare her position, while habits of mind connected with her daily occupation commonly engender mannerisms in air and gait which support the inference drawn from the character of her attire. It would appear anomalous to paint a woman so situated with such beauty of form and expression that she appears to have never experienced earthly cares of any kind, much less the long repeated daily worries consequent upon the charge of a poor household. Perfect beauty of form being essential in the representation of the Madonna, she must be painted amidst surroundings conformable with the supposition that she is free from earthly responsibilities, and that her mind is entirely occupied with the boundless joy and happiness arising from the contemplation of the divine Mission of her Son.⁴¹

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The difficulty in painting the Madonna is complicated when the Infant Christ is introduced, because of the liability of the Child to interfere with a fine presentation of her figure. A similar problem was met with by the early Greeks, and doubtless they dealt with it in their paintings as in their sculptures, a few of which, showing an adult holding a child, have come down to us. These represent the child reduced in size as far as possible, and carried at the side of the adult figure.^[h] A like system was followed by most of the Byzantine workers, and it is very noticeable in some of the fine French sculpture of the thirteenth century.^[i] In the same period Giovanni Pisano in sculpture,^[j] and Cimabue in painting,^[k] maintained the tradition in Italy, and in the century following, Giotto,^[l] Duccio,^[m] Lorenzetto,^[n] and others, often adopted the plan. Towards the middle of the fifteenth century, the relative importance attached to the Child in the group generally increased, and by the end of it, the old practice had been almost entirely abandoned. Meanwhile the artists had some hard problems to meet. The first was as to the size of the Child. It appeared to be generally agreed that an older Child should be represented than had been the custom, though a few artists held back, notably Fra Angelico, while in sculpture, Donatello maintained his habit of moulding the Child as only a few weeks old. With an increased age of the Child, the difficulty of securing repose for the group was enhanced, for it seemed to be proper with a child past its infancy, that it should be pictured as engaged in one of the charming simple actions common to childhood. These questions were settled in different ways according to the genius and temperament of the artists. A few of them, as Mantegna,^[o] Lorenzo Costa,^[p] and Montagna,^[q] gave the Child an age of two years or more, and in some of their designs the figures seem to be of equal significance, Mantegna and Montagna in several examples actually standing the Child in the Virgin's lap with the heads touching each other.

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PLATE 10



Raphael's Holy Family (Madrid), with the Face of Luini's Salome Substituted for that of the Virgin (See page 139)

Raphael's Holy Family (Madrid), with the Face of Luini's Salome Substituted for that of the Virgin

(See [page 139](#))

The plans usually adopted by the greatest masters, were, to present the maximum repose with the Child sitting in the lap of the Virgin; or to place Him apart from her, and engaged in some slight action; or to show Him in the arms of the Virgin, either held at the side, or in front, with the Virgin more or less in profile. In all of these schemes the serene contemplation of the Holy Mother is practically undisturbed. In his many groups of the Virgin and Child, and of the Holy Family, Raphael only varied twice from these plans,^[r] and in both the exceptions the Child reclines across the lap of the Virgin, so that very little of her figure is hidden. Titian has the Child standing by her side,^[s] or held away from her, and in one example the Virgin is placing Him in the hands of St. Joseph.^[t] Correggio, when away from the influence of Mantegna, usually showed the Child held apart from the Mother, or placed on the floor, or on a bench. It is a common device to show the Child on the lap of the Virgin, but leaning over to take a flower or other object offered Him,^[u] and numerous artists allow Him to play around separately.^[v] In Holbein's fine group at Augsburg, the Child stands between the Virgin and St. Anne, and another German painter shows Him held up by the same personages, but clear from both of them.^[w] Murillo commonly stands the Child at the side of the Virgin, but in one picture adopts the novel method of placing Him in the arms of St. Joseph.^[x]

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When the Child is shown distinctly apart from the Virgin, or leaning away from her lap, great care is necessary in avoiding strength in the action, otherwise it will draw attention away from the Virgin. A notable example of this defect is in a picture by Parmigiano, where the Child leans over and has his head brought close to that of a kneeling Saint who is caressing Him, the effect being most disturbing.^[y] Bramantino shows the Child in an extraordinary attitude, for He holds His head above His arms without any apparent reason, the action confusing the design.^[z] Many artists represent Him in the act of reaching out his hand for flowers, without choosing for the moment of portrayal, an instant of transition from one part of the action to another, ^[aa] a point rarely overlooked by the first masters.^[ab] Occasionally variety is given in the introduction of nursery duties, as for instance, washing the Child,^[ac] but these are inappropriate for reasons already

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indicated, apart from the over strong action necessarily exhibited in such designs. Nor should the Child have an unusual expression, as this will immediately catch the eye of the observer. In one work Del Sarto actually makes Him laugh,^[ad] and a modern artist gives Him an expression of fear.^[ae] It is questionable whether Masaccio^[af] and others (including A. della Robbia and Rossellino in sculpture) did not go too far in portraying the Child with a finger in its mouth, for although such an incident is common with children, in this case it seems opposed to propriety. Generally the first artists have striven to free the figure of the Virgin as far as possible, and this is in conformity with first principles, for it simplifies the view of the chief figure in the composition. In all cases repose should be the keynote of the design.

There are no general ideals in Christian art other than those mentioned. The presumed occupants of the Celestial regions beyond these Personages, are painted as the fancy of the artist may dictate, subject only to the limitations of the accepted Christian doctrines. There are certain conventions in respect of Angels and Saints, but they are by no means strict; and for the Old Testament prophets, Michelangelo's work in the Sistine Chapel is commonly taken as a guide. It is scarcely likely that his examples will ever be exceeded in majestic beauty.

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FOOTNOTES:

- [a] And in the drawing for the picture at the Brera.
- [b] Christ Blessing at the Brescia Gallery.
- [c] In the Sistine Chapel frescoes.
- [d] Christ bereft of His clothes before the Crucifixion, Sienna Academy.
- [e] Christ, Mayno Collection.
- [f] The Dead Christ, and Calling of the Children of Zebedee, Academy, Venice.
- [g] Dies Domini.
- [h] See the Olympian Hermes of Praxiteles, and Irene and Pluto after Cephisodostus at Munich.
- [i] Groups in the Southern and Western porches of Amiens Cathedral.
- [j] Madonna and Child, Arena Chapel, Padua.
- [k] Groups at the Florence Academy and the Louvre.
- [l] Florence Academy.
- [m] National Gallery, London.
- [n] San Francisco, Assisi.
- [o] Madonna and Angels, at Milan, and other works.
- [p] Coronation of the Virgin, Bologna.
- [q] Enthronement of the Virgin, Brera, Milan.
- [r] Madonna and Child, Bridgewater Coll., England; and same group with St. John, Berlin.
- [s] Madonna of the Cherries, Imperial Gallery, Vienna.
- [t] Meeting of Joachim and Anna, Bridgewater Coll., England.
- [u] Filipino Lippi's Madonna and Angels, Corsini Palace, Florence.
- [v] Luca Signorelli's group at Munich, and Bonfiglio's at Perugia.
- [w] Hans Fries, National Museum, Nuremburg.
- [x] Holy Family, Petrograd.
- [y] Madonna and Child with Saints, Bologna Academy.
- [z] Virgin with a Turban, Brera, Milan.
- [aa] As in B. da Bagnacavallo's Holy Family, Bologna; and Boltraffio's Holy Family, Milan.
- [ab] See Titian's Madonna with SS. Anthony and John, Uffizi Gallery.
- [ac] Giulio Romano's Holy Family, Dresden.
- [ad] Holy Family, Hermitage, Petrograd.
- [ae] Uhde's The Three Magi, Magdeburg Museum.
- [af] Madonna enthroned, Sutton Coll., England.

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CHAPTER VIII

EXPRESSION. PART III.—CLASSICAL IDEALS

Ideals of the Greeks—Aphrodite—Hera—Demeter—Athena—Apollo—Diana—Neptune—Mars—Mercury—Bacchus—Vulcan—General classical compositions.

What human being can appropriately describe the great ideals in art of ancient Greece? Above us all they stand, seemingly as upon the pinnacle of the universal mind, reflecting the collective human soul, and exhibiting the concentrated essence of human nature. The best of men and women of all ages is combined in these ideal heads, which look from an endless past to an eternal future; which embody every passion and every virtue; every religion and every philosophy; all wisdom and all knowledge. They are ideal gods and

goddesses, but are independent of legends and history. They represent no mythological deities except in name, and least of all do they assort with the deities of Homer and Hesiod. In all other religions the ideals expressed in art fail entirely to reach the height of the general conceptions, and are far below the spiritual beings as depicted in the sacred books; but the Grecian ideals as recorded in stone are so far beyond the legendary gods of the ancient poets, that we are unable to pass from the stone to the literature without an overwhelming feeling of astonishment at the contrast. It is unfortunate that we are powerless to re-establish these ideals definitely, for the originals have been mostly lost; nevertheless the ancient copies, a few contemporary complete sculptures, and many glorious fragments; as well as intimate descriptions and repeated eulogies, often reaching to hyperbole, of eminent men, expressed over a succession of centuries when the great works were still exposed to view—all this assembled evidence indelibly stamps upon our minds the nature of the ideals; gives us a clear impression of the most profound conceptions that have emanated from the human brain.

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The people who accomplished these great monuments seem to have thought only in terms of the universe. They did not seek for the embodiment of goodness, nobility, and charity, perfection in which qualities we regard as divine, but they aimed at a majesty which included all these things; which comprehended nothing but the supreme in form and mind; and with an all-reaching knowledge of the human race, stood outside of it, but covered it with reflected glory, as the sun stands ever away from the planets but illumines them all. The wonder is not that these ideals were created in the minds of the Greeks, for there is no boundary to the imagination, but that minds could be found to set them down in design, and hands to mould and shape them in clay and stone; and that many minds and hands could do these things in the same epoch. That these sculptured forms have never been equalled is not wonderful; that they never will be surpassed is as certain as that death is the penalty of life. So firmly have they become grafted into the minds of men as things unapproachable in beauty, that they have themselves been converted into general ideals towards which all must climb who attempt to scale the heights of art. The greatest artists known to us since the light of Greek intelligence flickered away, have been content to study these marble remains, and to cull from them a suggestion here, and an idea there, with which to adorn their own creations. Indeed it is clear that from the time of Niccolo Pisano, who leaped at one bound to celebrity after studying the antique sculptures at Pisa, through Giotto to the fifteenth and sixteenth century giants, there was hardly a great artist who was not more or less dependent upon Grecian art for his skill, and the most enduring of them all—Donatello, Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian, Correggio—were the most deeply versed in the art.⁴²

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Bellori affirmed that the Roman school, of which Raphael and Michelangelo were the greatest masters, derived its principles from the study of the statues and other works of the ancients.^[a] This is not strictly exact, but it is near the truth, and certain it is that Michelangelo, the first sculptor known to the world since the Dark Age, willingly bowed his head before the ancient triumphs of art presented to his view. And yet he did not see the Parthenon sculptures and other numerous works of the time of Phidias, with the many beautiful examples of the next century which have been made available since his day. What he would have said in the presence of the glories of the Parthenon, with the Hermes of Praxiteles and the rest of the collection from Olympia, is hard to conjecture, though it may well be suggested that they would have prompted him to still higher work than any he accomplished. With these stupendous ideals in front of us, it seems almost unnecessary to talk of the principles of art. Their very perfection indicates that they were built up on eternal principles, so that in fact and in theory they form the surest guide for the sculptor and painter.

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But how is the painter to use these ancient gods and goddesses, for the time has gone by to gather them together on the heights of Olympus, or to associate them with human frailties? Surely he may leave aside the fables of the poets, and try to portray the deities as the Grecian populace saw them in their hearts—noble forms of adoration, or images of terror, objects of curses venerated with prayer and of offerings wrapped in fear. The artist has not now to be troubled with pangs of dread, nor will his imagination be limited by sacerdotal scruples. The rivalry of Praxiteles need not concern him, for there are wondrous ideals yet to be wrought, which will be comprehended and loved even in these days of hastening endeavour. But the painter must leave alone the Zeus and the variation of this god in the pictured Christian Deity, for the type is so firmly established in the minds of men that it would be useless to depart from it. The other important Grecian deities with which art is concerned may be shortly considered from the point of view of the painter, though they are naturally of far more importance to the sculptor because it is beyond the power of the painter to suggest an illusion of divine form, since he must associate his figures with human accessories.⁴³

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APHRODITE

Astarte, Aphrodite, Venus, Spirit of Love, or by whatever name we call her; the one eternal divinity recognized by all ages, all races; the universal essence whose fragrance intoxicates every soul: the one queen before whom all must bow: the one imperial autocrat sure of everlasting rule—sure of the devoted allegiance of every living thing to the end of time! Such is Aphrodite, for that is the name under which we seem to love her best—the Aphrodite of the Greeks, without the vague terrifying aspect of Astarte, or the more earthly qualities of the Roman Venus. Who loves not the Aphrodite sprung from the foam of the sea; shading the sun on the Cytheran isle with the light of her glory; casting an eternal hallow over the groves of Cyprus; flooding the god-like mind of Greece with her sparkling radiance? What conception of her beauty can rise high enough when the grass in astonishment grows beneath her feet on desert rocks; when lions and tigers gently purr as she passes, and the rose and the myrtle throw out their scented blossoms to sweeten the air? Hera and Athena leave the heavens to help man fight and kill: Aphrodite descends to soothe despairing hearts, and kindle kindly flame in the breast of the loveless. The spear and the shield with the crested helmet she knows not, nor the fiery coursers accustomed to the din of strife. Serenely she traverses space at the call of a lover's prayer, her car a bower of celestial blooms. From the ends of the earth fly the sparrows to draw it, till their myriads hide the sun, and mortals learn that the time has come when their thoughts may turn to the spirit of love.

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This was the Aphrodite of Grecian legend and poetry, if we except Homer and Hesiod. It is the type of the goddess whom Sappho implored, and must be accepted as the general ideal of the Grecian worshippers who desired divine mediation when troubled with pangs of the heart. But it was not the type of Phidias and his school, for Phidias passed over Hesiod and purified Homer, representing Aphrodite with the stately mien and lofty bearing of a queen of heaven, daughter of the all-powerful Dione: goddess of beauty and love certainly, but so far above the human understanding of these terms that all efforts to associate her with mundane ideas and aspirations must signally fail.⁴⁴

So far as we know it was Praxiteles who first attempted to realize in stone the popular ideal of the goddess, and certainly the Cnidian Aphrodite was better understood by the people of Greece as a type of this ideal than any work that preceded it. We can attach to it in our minds but very few of the Homeric and other legends surrounding the history of the goddess, but we can well imagine that a deity who was the subject of so much attention and so much prayer, could rest in the hearts of the people only as one with every supreme earthly charm, combined with a divine bearing and dignity. These qualities the Aphrodite of Praxiteles appears to have possessed, though it lacked the majesty and exclusiveness of the Parthenon gods.⁴⁵

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Thus there was formed a type of beauty acceptable to the average human mind as an unsurpassable representation of an ideal woman: to the worshipper at the ancient shrines, a comprehensible goddess; to all other men the personification of sublime beauty. The fifth century goddess was left aside as beyond mortal reach, and from the time it left the sculptor's hands to this day, the Cnidian Venus has been regarded as a model for all that is true and beautiful in women. To the sculptor it is an everlasting beacon; to all men a crowning glory of human handiwork. And this notwithstanding that so far as we know, the original figure has long been lost, and we have preserved little more than records of its renown, a fair copy of it, and a single authentic example of the other work of the sculptor. But if we had the actual Aphrodite before us, it could not occupy a higher place in our minds than the goddess which our imagination builds upon this framework.

As in all cases where a supreme artist rises above his fellows and creates works of which emulation appears hopeless, the period succeeding the time of Praxiteles seems to mark a decline in the art of sculpture, and though the decline was more apparent than real for about half a century, there was naturally a depreciation in the representation of the deities of whom the great man had fashioned masterpieces. This was so in the case of Aphrodite. Whoever the sculptor it seemed impossible to approach the Cnidian ideal, and the result was a series of variations stamped with artificial devices as if to emphasize the departure. But meanwhile the painter's art had developed upon much the same lines as sculpture, and Apelles produced an Aphrodite, which, considering the limitation of the painter, appears to have been almost, if not quite, as marvellous as the stone model of Praxiteles. Nearly two thousand years have passed since the painting was last known to exist, but its fame was so great that the reverberations from the thunder of praise accorded it have scarcely yet died away. No close description of the painting remains, but from certain references to it by ancient authors we know that it represented the sea-born goddess walking towards the shore to make her first appearance on earth, holding in each hand a tress of hair as if in the act of wringing out the water therein.⁴⁶ These are practically all the written details we have of the famous Venus Anadyomene, but we really know much more of it from the existence of certain pre-Roman sculptures. All but one are broken, with parts missing, but the exception, which dates from about the beginning of the third century B.C., enables us to gain a good idea of the picture. The figure represents the goddess with her lower limbs cut off close to the hips; that is to say, it produces the whole of that part of the figure in the picture of Apelles which is visible above the water.^[b] Clearly a subject in which Venus is shown to be walking in the sea, so foreign to the art of the sculptor, could not have suggested itself independently to a Grecian artist, nor would we expect to find one attempting a work which necessitated amputation of the lower limbs, unless a very special occasion warranted the design. The special occasion in this case was the picture of Apelles, which was at the time renowned through the whole of Greece as an extraordinary masterpiece, and with this work in their minds the sculptured head and torso would appear quite appropriate to those Greeks interested in the arts, that is to say, the entire citizen population.

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PLATE 11



The Pursuit, by Fragonard
(Frick Collection)

(See page 139)

The Pursuit, by Fragonard
(Frick Collection)

(See [page 139](#))

These two works then, the Cnidian Venus and the Venus Anadyomene of Apelles, constitute the models upon which the world relies for its conceptions of the goddess of beauty. Both models depend more or less upon the imagination for completion, but they are sufficiently definite for the artist, who, of course, desires general rather than particular ideas for his purpose.

It must be confessed that the attempts to rival Apelles in the creation of a Venus Anadyomene have not been very successful. Raphael painted a small picture of the subject, introducing the figure of Time putting an end to the power of the Titans.^[c] Venus stands in the water with one foot on a shell, while holding a tress of hair with her left hand. As may be expected the execution is perfect, but the design is less attractive than that of Apelles. The only important work of the Renaissance directly based upon the Greek design, is from the hand of Titian.^[d] He represents the goddess walking out of the water, the surface of which only reaches half way up the thighs, with the result that considerably more action is indicated than is necessary. But the great artist was evidently at a loss to know how to give the figure the size of life or thereabouts, while indicating from the depth of water that she had an appreciable distance to go before touching dry land. He solved the problem by placing the line of the front leg to which the water rises, at the bottom of the canvas, so that the picture suggests an accident which has necessitated the cutting away of the lower portion of the work. The master also varies the scheme of Apelles by crossing the left hand over the breast. This inferior device was imitated by Rubens, who, however, exhibits the goddess rising from the water amongst a group of nymphs and tritons.^[e] Modern artists in designs of the birth of Venus, usually represent her as having reached the shore,^[f] the best work of this scheme being perhaps that of Cabanel who shows the goddess lying at the water's edge and just awaking, suggesting a state of unconsciousness while she floated on the waves.^[g] Another exception is by Thoma, who exhibits the goddess walking in only a few inches of water, reminding one of the old Roman bronze workers who imitated the form as painted by Apelles, but modelled the whole figure.

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Repose being the first compulsory quality in the representation of Aphrodite, it is not surprising to find that the greatest picture of the goddess extant—the masterpiece of Giorgione—shows her asleep.^[h] She rests on a verdure couch in a landscape of which the signs indicate a soft and tranquil atmosphere, with no suggestion to disturb the repose or remove the illusion of life so strongly marked by the skilful drawing. Only the calm sleeping beauty is there without appearance of fatigue or recovery from it: no expression save of perfect dreamless unconsciousness. The work is the nearest approach to a classical ideal that exists in Venetian painting. Titian in his various pictures of Venus reposing never reached the excellence of his master. In all, he painted the goddess in a resting position, sometimes radiant and brilliant, and invariably with a contented expression which precludes sensual suggestions: still there is ever a distinctly earthy tone about the figures. His Venuses in fact are pure portraits. He did not seek to represent profound repose. His most important example is at the Uffizi Gallery,^[i] the design of which was taken from Giorgione's work. The goddess is a figure of glowing beauty, but the pose indicates consciousness of this fact and calls the model to mind. Perhaps the surroundings tend to accentuate the drawback, for in this, as in most of his other pictures of Venus, the artist has introduced Venetian accessories of the period. Palma Vecchio also took Giorgione's work as a guide for his reposing Venus, but he represents her fully awake with Cupid present.^[j] An exceptional work of the subject was designed by Michelangelo, and painted by Pontormo^[k] and others. It represents the goddess reclining with Cupid at her head; but the form is entirely opposed to all our conceptions of Venus, for she is seen as a broad massive woman with a short neck, and a strongly formed head—a fit companion for some of the figures in the Sistine Chapel. Proud dignity and a certain majesty are suggested in the expression, but the figure is without the grace and charm usually associated with the goddess. The only other early Italian reposing Venus of interest is Botticelli's, where he shows her in deep thought with two cupids by her side.^[l]

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In the seventeenth century Venus was rarely represented reposing. Nicholas Poussin has a fine picture on the subject, but unfortunately for the repose a couple of cupids are in action beside the sleeping goddess, while the heads of two satyrs are dimly seen.^[m] In the *Sleeping Venus* of Le Sueur, which was much praised in former times, Cupid is present with a finger to his mouth to indicate silence, but Vulcan is seen in an adjoining room wielding a heavy hammer, the suggestion of repose being thus destroyed. No reposing Venus of importance has since been produced, though a few French artists have treated the subject in a light vein, notably Boucher in his *Sleeping Venus*, and Fragonard in a delicate composition of *Venus awakened by Aurora*.

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Venus cannot be represented as conscious of her beauty, or the design would immediately suggest vanity. Consequently when shown looking into a mirror, she should be engaged at her toilet, or at least the reflection should be accidental. Titian painted the first great picture of the goddess at her toilet, but this is just completed and her hands are at rest.^[n] The attitude would be extravagant were it not that any suggestion of satisfaction is overcome by the artist making Cupid hold the mirror, and giving Venus an expression of unconcern as she glances at her reflection. The work suggested to Rubens a similar design, but he shows the goddess dressing her hair, this being apparently the only definite action which may be properly introduced into such a composition.^[o] Albani has a delightful picture in which Cupid compels Venus to hold a mirror,^[p] and some later artists have represented her adorning her tresses with the aid of a water reflection. The only notable *faux pas* in a painting of this subject is in the *Venus and Cupid* assigned to Velasquez, in which Venus lies on her side and looks into a mirror held by Cupid at her feet.^[q] There is no suggestion of toilet or accident, and hence the attitude is quite inapplicable to a goddess.

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It should be remembered that the province of Aphrodite is to infuse the gentle warmth of love into the human race, and not to attract love to herself. The rays are presumed to proceed from her only, for a mortal having no divine powers would be incapable of reflecting them. Zeus was required to bring about the adventure with Anchises. Hence a voluptuous form should never be given to the goddess, and if an artist err at all in the matter, it should be on the side of restraint lest the art be affected by a suggestion of the sensuous. The surest means of preventing this is to represent the goddess in an attitude of repose, with perfect contentment as a feature in expression. If any action be indicated, it must be light and purely accidental in its nature. To introduce an action involving an apprehension of human failings tends to bring the goddess down to the human level, and thus to destroy the ideal. The *Venus de' Medici* is a superb sculpture of a woman, but an inferior representation of Venus, for modesty is a human attribute arising from purely artificial circumstances of life, its meaning varying with race conditions and customs. To depict a goddess in an action suggestive of modesty or other antidote to the coarser effects of natural instincts, is therefore an anomaly.

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HERA

There is no fixed type in art of the ox-eyed sister and spouse of Zeus, the Queen of Olympus, whose breast heaves ever high, and flaming, with the rushing fire of jealousy; the Virgilian incarnation of bitter rage; yet withal the symbol of eternal Earth, yearly renewing her fruitful youth with the burning kiss of the sun. The sculptors of Greece saw in her only the supreme Matron-Spouse, serenely pondering the march of time beneath the awful sway of her lord. A mantle she wore, and a high-throated tunic, as she looked into space from a square-wrought throne; or she stood in her temple with flowing robe and diadem, inscrutable, before the offerings of an adoring multitude. But nevertheless she was not insensible to the radiance of Aphrodite. Polyclitus did well to place a cuckoo on her sceptre, and who can forget how the lotus and the hyacinth cushioned the ground on the heights of Ida beneath a golden cloud, which held suspended around the glittering couch a screen of sparkling dew?

It is unfortunate that the painter is at a loss to deal with the majestic scenes in great Juno's story. How is he to depict her flying in the celestial chariot between heaven and earth, each leap of the fiery coursers measuring the range of the eye from a lofty peak across the sea to the endless haze? How can he paint her anointed with ambrosial oil which is ever struggling for freedom to bathe the rolling earth in fragrance? He may add a hundred tassels to her girdle; perhaps give her the triple grace-showering eardrops, and even the dazzling sun-bright veil; but the girdle of Aphrodite, which peeps from her bosom, will fail to turn the brains of men, or pierce their hearts with rays of soft desire. And the more dreadful side of Hera's history would equally trouble the despairing artist, for dire anger and jealousy ill-become the countenance of a goddess. The smouldering fire must never leap into flame. Eyes may not flash, not the lips quiver, and the noble brow must be free from fitful thought.

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So with Hera there is no middle course for the painter. He must represent her alone, calm and passionless, unfathomable, with a sublime disregard of earth; or else join with his predecessors and drag her down to a mundane level in scenes of trivial fable. But there is room for untold Heras of the higher type.

DEMETER

Matron-Guardian of the yielding soil; heart-stricken wanderer over the earth; mysterious silent Food-Mother whom all men love and the gods revere; eternal life-preserver; fruitful, but passionless save where the vision of Pluto looms, Iasus and Poseidon notwithstanding! Such was the Demeter of the ancient Greeks till the hordes of Alexander mingled her fame with the lustre from Isis and De. So the mourning *haute dame* of Olympus came nearer the seat of her care, nearer the dread home of her daughter: passed from Homer to Theocritus; from the adoration of the higher priesthood of Greece, to become merged in the Ceres of Rome, the goddess beloved of the lowly, who received the first fruits of the field amidst joyful measures of dance and song. But it is the *haute dame* that strikes our imagination—the staid and mystic Demeter of Eleusis, and not the Ceres of the Roman lyric. The light-hearted Ceres, as a beautiful woman in the prime of life, may be adorned with poppies and wheat-ears, may stand serene and smiling as a symbol of harvest or the goddess of a Latin temple; but paint her as one will, she will do little more than serve to show how fallen are the idols—how immeasurable is the descent from the stately Earth-Mother whose image would be stamped on the brain of a Phidias.

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But where is the Phidian Demeter? Surely such a goddess, "deeply musing in her hallowed shrine," was a theme for the carver of the immortal Zeus and Athena! Perhaps those inscrutable headless "Fates" from the Parthenon, so wonderful in noble grace that the conception of befitting heads is beyond the reach of our minds, include the Earth-Mother and her daughter! How easy it is to imagine the reclining figure as Persephone leaning upon the mother who loved her so well! But we must be content with what we have of Demeter in art, which is little more than a few fifth century frieze reliefs, the figure from Cnidos attributed to Scopas,^[r] and some Damophon memories of Phidias.

So the artist is free and untrammelled in respect of the representation of the far-famed goddess. There is no definite type of her which has fixed itself on the minds of men, though the legend and story weaved about her name are beautiful and wonderful in a high degree.

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ATHENA

Though swathed in legend and surrounded with a hallow of Grecian reverence, Athena is always cold. She may dim the sun with the radiance of her armour; ride in a flaming car, and have Strength and Invisibility for her allies; but she fights only on the side of the strong, and uses the tactics of spies against her enemies. With the Gorgon's head on her shield, and a helmet which will cover the soldiers of a hundred towns, she yet whispers advice to Grecian heroes, and deflects a Trojan arrow in its flight. Truly as Goddess of War she is somewhat difficult to generalize. But she is also the divinity of the arts and sciences; invents the pipe and the shuttle, and becomes the depository of all industrial knowledge. Hence she embodies the triumphs of peace and war—combines the extremes of human exertion.

How Phidias overcame the task of representing the goddess is well known. He generalized war and wisdom, and from his great work of the Parthenon there can be little departure in respect of bearing and attitude, so long as the province of war is symbolized in the design. The actual work of the Greek master has disappeared, but from various records and copies, it would appear that the Parthenon Athena was the loftiest conception ever worked out in sculpture, if we except the Olympian Zeus. Majestic grace and the unconscious power derived from supreme knowledge, seem to have been the first qualities exhibited in the statue. In the fourth century there was no great departure from the Phidian ideal, and it is difficult to see how there could be much modification in the direction of bringing the conception closer to earth, for the goddess had no special presumed form which could be adapted by the artist to popular ideas. A nude figure would be impossible because in this the force and power implied in a hero of war could not be combined with feminine attributes. The Greeks drew the line at observable muscular developments, invariably clothing nearly the whole of the figure, but they did not, and could not, free her general bearing from certain masculine qualities. It is true that the costume of the goddess might be modified, and Phidias himself represented her in one or two statues without a helmet, an example followed by several artists of the Renaissance,^[s] but so long as the symbols of war are included in her habit, she can be only of formal use to the painter.

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APOLLO

Although in mythology Apollo is connected with everything on earth which is useful or pleasing to mankind, in art custom has so confined his representation in respect of both appearance and symbols, that a type has been established from which it would be difficult to depart without a suggestion of incongruity arising. This type is of a more purely formal character than that of any other god, except perhaps Mercury, a circumstance probably arising from the fact that the reputed hard nature of Apollo fails to lend itself to sympathetic idealization. He does not appear to have been a favourite subject with the greatest sculptors of ancient times, for nearly all the innumerable statues of him which have come down to us, are reproductions of two or three types which in themselves vary but little. It is difficult to see how a really noble ideal of such a god can be suggested. Stern and inflexible, with many human vices but no weaknesses or gentle traits, and withal a model of physical beauty without strength or apparent power—in fact an emphasized feminine form: such is the Apollo of tradition and art. We cannot wonder that the type was quickly fixed, the limitations to avoid the abnormal being so well defined.

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The painter then has small scope with the figure of this god. He may only slightly vary the accepted form, which admits of but a negative expression. The best representation of Apollo in modern art is the one by Raphael in the Parnassus fresco at the Vatican, though the beautiful figure in the Marsyas work at the Louvre is very nearly as perfect.⁴⁸ Raphael does not give to the god the rounded swellings of a female form, but overcomes the difficulty by showing him as a young man of perfect figure who has just reached maturity. The expression is entirely general, but does not suggest a god-like power.

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DIANA

It would scarcely be natural to be sympathetic with Artemis. She seems to be the feminine type of a cold flint-like nature, as Apollo is the masculine, and one can well understand that mythology makes of them brother and sister. Mistress of wild beasts and goddess of sudden death, she was always worshipped from fear: her wrath had ever to be appeased; she inspired neither affection nor respect. True, she wore the mantle of Illythia, but only to be dreaded, and even the attempt to throw a warm halo over her by the theft of the Endymion story for her benefit, failed to lift her reputation for the tireless satisfaction of a supernatural spleen. Nevertheless for the painter Diana has always had a certain attraction, because the legends connected with her offer opportunities for the exercise of skill in the representation of the nude. But there is an end of all things, and the bathing and hunting scenes have been fairly exhausted. For the sculptor only is Artemis likely to live. Bright colours are not the vehicle to represent the symbol of an idea which is beyond, but not above, nature—a useless abstraction which neither warms the heart nor elevates the soul. Callisto draws our sympathy, and Niobe our tears: the goddess freezes our veins.

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NEPTUNE

Brother of Jupiter and Pluto; sire of Theseus, of Polyphemus, and of the titanic lads who threatened to pile mountain on mountain in order to destroy the home of the deities; the god whose footsteps tremble the earth; who disputes with the sun; who uses floods and earthquakes for weapons; who owns vast palaces in the caverns of the deep; for whom the angry waves sink down beneath the shining sea, and ocean monsters play around his lightning track across the waters: this is the divinity whom the painter is accustomed to portray as a rough bearded man with dishevelled hair and rugged features, holding a three-pronged fork, and associating with dolphins, mermaids, and shells. But Neptune is not a popular god. He does not appeal to the mind as a good-natured god like Jupiter or Mercury, with many of the virtues and some of the failings of mankind. His acts are mostly violent; he punishes but does not reward; grows angry but is never kind. There is consequently no sympathetic attitude towards him on the part of the artist, who would sooner paint good than bad actions. Beyond his violent acts, the circumstances which make up the history of the god, provide subjects more suitable for the poet than the painter, who is practically confined to unimportant and casual incidents which, with changes of accessories, would answer a thousand scenes in mythological history. Neptune then may well disappear from the purview of the painter, with the tritons and the seaweed entourage.

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MARS

From the point of view of the painter, there is little to say about the Grecian Ares. He has not a single good trait in legend or story, and we know nothing of his presumed personal form beyond the military externals. It is difficult to understand how such a god came to be included among the deities of a civilized race. Of what service could be prayer when it is addressed to a blatant, bloodstained, genius of the brutal side of war, without feeling or pity, and apparently so wanting in intelligence that he has to leave the direction of battles to a goddess? One would think that Homer intended him as the god of bullies, or he would not have made him roar like ten thousand men when struck with a stone, nor would he have allowed him to be imprisoned by two young demigods, and contemptuously wounded by a third. But who is responsible for the association of such a wretched example of divinity with the radiant Aphrodite, for surely it is only the cloak of Homer that covers the story! Was it a painter who had sought in vain from the poets a suggestion for a composition in which the god would at least appear normal, or a cynical critic who wished to incite ridicule as well as contempt for the divinity? In any case the painter must sigh in vain for an inspiring design with Ares as the leading figure: he cannot harmonize love and terror.

The Roman Mars has a slight advantage over Ares, for the name of Silvia is sweetly-sounding, but she should be represented alone, as the star of the wild Campagna, while yet it was forest-clad: the gleaming light whose rays are to illumine the earth. Mars may disappear with the wolf, but who can hide the glory of Rome?

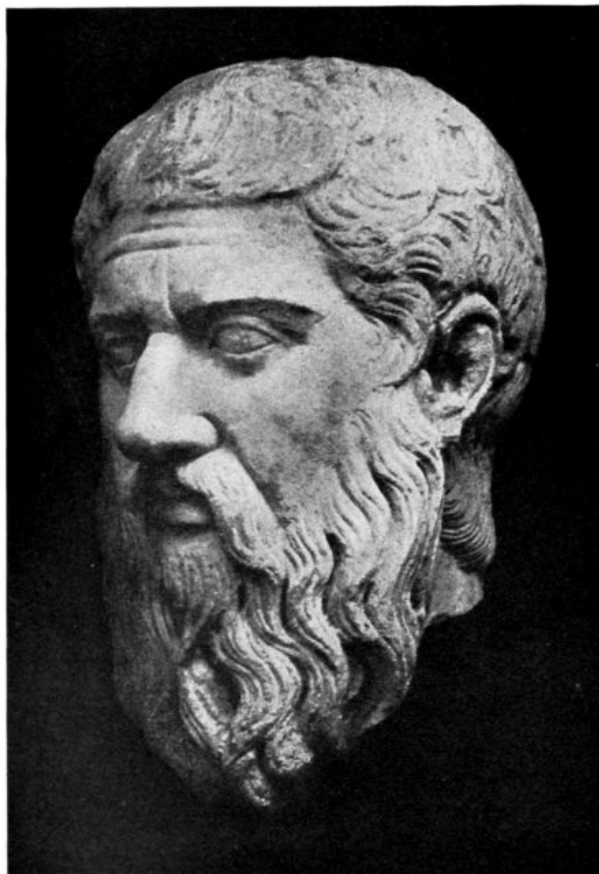
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MERCURY

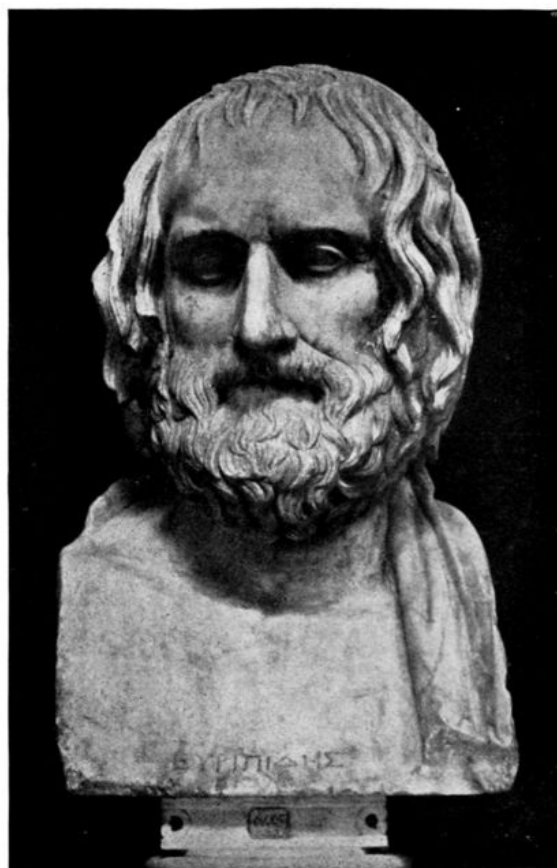
It is difficult to connect the Hermes of the poet with the tedious expressionless figure commonly seen in painting, whose only costume is a helmet, and whose invariable province is apparently to look on and do nothing. For the sculptor he is a god; for the painter a symbol of subordination. A Rubens may give him the pulse of life, but only the sculptor can suggest the divinity. With the painter the winged helmet is a bizarre ornament; the immortal sandals are shrunken to leather; the caduceus is a thing of inertia which is ever in the way. But with the sculptor all these things may be endowed with the quickening spirit of a soaring mind, for does not Giovanni di Bologna show the lithesome god speeding through space ahead of the wind, the feathery foot-wings humming with delirium, the trembling air dividing hastily before the wand? True, the painter may represent the divine herald on his way through space, as when he conducts Psyche to Olympus, or leads the shades of the suitors to Hades; but the accessories present must surround him with an earthy framework, unless the design be confined to a ceiling, and shut away from things mundane with architectural forms, as in the plan of Raphael at the Farnese Villa, or to a fresco executed in the manner of a Flaxman drawing. Beyond these artifices the artist cannot go with propriety.

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PLATE 12



Head of Plato



Head of Euripides

Greek Portraiture

(See page 145)

Head of Plato

Greek Portraiture

Head of Euripides

(See [page 145](#))

Few and worn are the scenes in the history of the god in which he takes a leading part. The head of Argus seems to be cut off, or awaiting separation, in nearly every collection, sometimes with Juno on a cloud deeply frowning with revengeful ire, occasionally with the peacock expectant of its glorious fan, but always with the weak-looking helmeted piper, passive and unconcerned as if fulfilling a daily task. A Correggio may weave his golden fancy around a scene where Cupid learns to strengthen his arrows with the rules of science and the wiles of art; but let the painter beware of the infant Bacchus in the arms of the messenger-god, lest a vision of the Olympian group arise and enfold his work in a robe of charity. The schemes whereby the cradled thief deceived the Pythian god are beyond the scope of the painter, though there is a certain available range in the charming actions surrounding the invention of the lyre. And if the designs relating to the unfortunate Lara be properly consigned to oblivion, surely the connection of Hermes with Pandora offers a field for the sprightly imagination. But save where the god is a symbol of commerce or speed, the helmet should be dispensed with, for it is hackneyed beyond endurance. The modern painter is not bound by custom unless the provision of beauty conflict with the lucidity of the design or the reverence for universal sentiment. Let the winged heels suffice, for the shadow of Persius will scarcely rise in protest.

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BACCHUS

Centuries of bacchanalian festivities and revelries have nearly killed Bacchus for the painter. Who can further interest himself in meaningless processions, where the most prominent figure is a fat, drunken, staggering man, supported by goat-hoofed monstrosities, and attended by all the insignia of vinous royalty? Silenus is no more the loving nurse of the infant god; the satyrs are no more the followers of a reed-playing woodland deity; the nymphs have long forgotten the flowery dales, the faithful trees that lived and died with them, the fairy bowers where first Semele's offspring clapped his hands to the measure of dance and pipe. Why should the dance be turned into a drunken revel? Why should the artist remember the orgies of Rome, and forget the Grecian pastoral fancies? What has become of Dionysus, inheritor of Vishnu traditions, the many-named father of song, the leader of the Muses, and the fire-born enemy of pirates? Nothing remains of him worth remembering, save Ariadne the golden-haired, and she must in future be left on the desert isle lest the pathos of her figure be disturbed by the motley followers of her rescuer.

It is passing strange that the artists of the Renaissance did not attempt to lift Bacchus out of the ditch of ignominy into which he had fallen. They seem to have taken their ideas from the recorded accounts of the Roman rites and vine festivals, overlooking the Grecian suggestions relating to Dionysus, and even the later restrained reliefs picturing incidents in his history. In their art, however, as is evidenced by Pompeian frescoes, the Romans often treated Bacchus in a serious manner, associating him with higher interests than those connected with festival orgies. It may be that the figure of the god carved by Michelangelo^[t] had something to do with the later coarse representations of him, for it would have been impossible for artists succeeding so great a sculptor, to ignore the types he created. But it will be an eternal mystery how he came to design such a Bacchus. A voluptuous semi-realistic god, opposed to everything else that was conceived by

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the sculptor, and antagonistic to all that was known in Greece, it can never be anything more than a sublime example of a purely earthly figure. One stands amazed before the perfect modelling, but aghast at the conception. It represents the most extraordinary transition from the god-like man of the Greeks, to a man-like god, ever seen in art.

The painter then has little left to use of the conventional Bacchus and his history, except the never-dying Ariadne, but there is nothing to prevent him from reverting to the pastoral Dionysus, to the delightful abodes of the nymphs his foster-mothers, where Pan played and the Muses sang, while the never-tiring son of Maia breathed tales of love into willing ears.

VULCAN

The poet may continue to hold our fancy with volcanic fires and cyclopean hammers, but on canvas Etna becomes a blacksmith's forge, and the figure of a begrimed human toiler is given to the divinity responsible for the golden handmaids, and the brazen bull whose breath was scorching flame. There is rarely a painting of Vulcan without a forge and leather bellows, with a smith who is stripped to the waist, which earthly things necessarily kill all suggestions of celestial interest, notwithstanding the presence of Venus, or the never-fading bride of palsied Peleus. Occasionally we have the incident with Mars, and strangely look for the invisible net, but not finding it we are immediately called back to earth to ponder over the wiles of the ancient legend gatherers. The art is lost behind the unreality. But why does not the painter revert to the childhood of Vulcan, when he was hiding in the glistening cavern beneath the roll of ocean, fashioning resplendent eardrops for silver-footed Thetis? Here is scope for the imagination—to indicate the fancies of the budding genius who was to carve the wondrous shield, and adorn the heaven-domed halls of Olympus. Let Hephæstus mature as he will for the poet: he should only bloom for the painter.

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GENERAL CLASSICAL COMPOSITIONS

Scenes of adventure from the ancient poets in which the gods and goddesses are concerned, appear to be rapidly becoming things of the past for the painter. This is partly due to the circumstance that these scenes have been so multiplied since the early days of the Renaissance, that they are now positively fatiguing to both artists and the public; but there is a deeper reason. If we try to number the paintings of classical subjects by first-class artists which are enshrined in our minds, we can count very few, and nearly all of these are single figures, as a Venus, a Leda, a Psyche, or a Pandora. We do not call up a Judgment of Paris, or a Diana and Actæon, or any other design where divinities are mixed with mortals in earthly actions. The cause of this seems to be that our minds naturally revolt against a glaring incongruity. The imagination is unable to harmonize the qualities of a god with the possession of human instincts and frailties, or strike a balance between divine actions and human motives. We see these pictures and admire the design and execution, but they leave us cold: we are unable to kindle enthusiasm over patent unreality. The general conclusion is that painters would be wise to avoid such compositions, and confine their attention in classical work to single figures of goddesses or heroines, leaving to the poet suggestion of miraculous powers.

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FOOTNOTES:

- [a] *Le Vite de' Pittori, Scultori, e Architteti moderni.*
- [b] See Plate 4.
- [c] In the bathroom of Cardinal Bibiena, Vatican. There is a drawing for the figure of the goddess at the Munich Gallery.
- [d] Bridgewater Coll., England. See Plate 5.
- [e] Birth of Venus, at Potsdam.
- [f] Notable examples are those of Ingres and Bouguereau.
- [g] At the Luxembourg, Paris. There are several replicas of this picture.
- [h] Dresden Gallery. See Plate 6. Titian added a Cupid to this picture, but the little god was subsequently painted out by a restorer. (L. Venturi, *Giorgione e il Giorgionismo*, 1913.)
- [i] The sitter is supposed to have been the model also for La Bella in the Uffizi, and the Woman in Fur at the Vienna Gallery.
- [j] Dresden Gallery.
- [k] Hampton Court Palace, England.
- [l] National Gallery, London.
- [m] Dresden Gallery.
- [n] The Hermitage, Petrograd.
- [o] Hofmuseum, Vienna.
- [p] The Louvre.
- [q] National Gallery, London.
- [r] See Plate 7.
- [s] See Piero di Cosimo's Marsyas and the Pipes of Athena,⁴⁷ and Botticelli's Athena and the Centaur.
- [t] In the Bargello, Florence.

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CHAPTER IX

EXPRESSION. PART IV.—GENERAL IDEALS

Limitation of the painter with general ideals—Ideal heads interchangeable in sacred and symbolical art—Ideal male human countenances impossible for the painter.

In the arts of sculpture and painting, where it is necessary that the beauty should be immediately recognized by the eye, it is obvious that a general expression is superior to the particular. This is so because the general covers universal experience and the particular does not. But in the art of the painter there is a limit to the expression of general beauty. Theoretically there is no beauty possible to the sculptor which the painter cannot produce, but practically there is. A sculptor may carve what we understand as a god-like figure—a glorious image embodying all the highest qualities that may be conceived by man, with a general expression covering supreme wisdom and every noble attribute—such a figure as the greatest Grecian artist chiselled. This figure would stand in front of us, isolated, serene in its glory, and we should look and wonder, and a second or two would suffice to fill our entire mind with the image. For it would be above the earth, above all our surroundings. We could connect nothing on earth with it—neither human beings, nor green fields, nor the seas, and certainly not human habitations, and ways, and manners, and actions. A Phidian god can have no setting. Everything on earth is too small, too insignificant to bear it company. The reflection from the majesty of the design throws into shadow our loftiest earthly conceptions.

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Let us suppose that a painter could be found who could execute such a figure: how could he isolate it to the mind? He may not use accessories, for these could not be separated by the eye, and the association with earth which they would imply would destroy the illusion. But the figure must have relief, and hence tones. A monochrome would not do, for the frame or sides of the wall containing the picture would flatten it, and suggest a painted imitation of a sculpture. We may imagine a colossal figure painted on an immense wall whose bounds are hidden by the concentration of all the available light on the figure. Even then the colouring of the wall must be unseen. The figure must stand out as if against infinite space, surrounded by ambient air, in majestic solitude, pondering over the everlasting roll of life towards perfection. In this way only could the painter match the sculptor, but the practical difficulties are so enormous as to render the scheme to all intents and purposes impossible.

For the painter then there is a limit to expression. He cannot proceed with his ideal higher than Praxiteles. His limit is the most supreme form and expression conceivable by his imagination, which does not exceed the apparent possibility of human experience. Apparent, because an ideal must necessarily be actually above the possibility of experience, but it may not appear to be so. For instance a Raphael Madonna does not seem to represent a supernatural woman. There is no single feature painted which cannot be matched in life, and hence it would not occur to the observer that the expression is contrary to the possibility of experience. But the expression cannot be met with in life, for besides being entirely general, it excludes all phases due to the emotions or passions. One cannot imagine a woman with the expression of a Raphael Madonna having concern with any special human interest, and least of all with feelings and failings arising from natural instincts. Yet the expression covers every form of noble endeavour; every phase of innocent pleasure; every degree of mental activity within the province of woman. And herein lies the art—the exclusion of the bad in our nature, with the exaltation of the good.

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Now it is obvious that if the expression be so general that no particular quality can be identified therein, the countenance will serve for the head of any personage painted in whose expression it is desirable to indicate the possession of high attributes, without suggesting a particular condition of mind. Thus, the head of a Raphael Madonna would equally serve for the head of a Saint Cecilia or a Judith; or, providing the age were suitable, for a heroine of the stamp of Joan of Arc, so long as the character of her actual features were unknown. Further it would be well adapted for a symbolical figure, as Prudence or Truth.

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But a far wider significance than is thus indicated, is conveyed by the necessity for generalizing expression in order to reach the painter's ideal. It has already been noted that inasmuch as all men have the same general idea of beauty—that they generally agree as to what is, or is not, beautiful, it follows that there must be a common opinion as to degrees of beauty, and so a universality of ideal; that is of course, among people with similar experience of life, as for instance the white races of the world.^[49] Hence the ideals of all painters must be similar. They must necessarily aim for the same generalization—exclude or emphasize like. Manner or style, or national type may vary; purely sensorial effects may differ as the minds of the painters have been variously trained, but the combination of features and effects which regulate the expression will be practically identical in every realized ideal. Consequently, subject to changes in attitude or age, ideal heads of all artists are interchangeable without incongruity resulting, irrespective of the motive of the design, for the ideal countenance indicated adapts itself to any character where no emotional or passionate expression is required. The head of the figure representing "Profane Love" in Titian's great picture, would serve to express spiritual nobility in a Madonna,^[a] and when a head in a Madonna by Raphael is exchanged with that of the central figure in Fragonard's *The Pursuit*,^[b] there is no resulting suggestion of impropriety in either picture.^[c] Ideal countenances have sometimes been given to evil characters, as in Luini's *Salome*,^[d] and the head in this picture would equally well serve for a Madonna.^[e]

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An ideal head then will suggest any expression that the design in which it is included seems to require, subject to the restrictions before noted. In *The Pursuit* the face of the woman presumed to be fleeing from her lover indicates some concern, and even a little fear,^[f] but that this is due to the surroundings in the work, is shown when the head is substituted for another in a different picture, for the concern has disappeared, and the expression becomes one which may properly represent the highest attributes connected with the Madonna.

The limits within which the form and countenance of a woman may be idealized, are prescribed by Raphael in his works. The presumed age must be that when she reaches the full bloom of womanhood. Youth will not do because it involves an expression denying experience, while physically a girl cannot be supposed to have reached an age where her form has ceased to progress towards perfection. Beauty of feature and form is the first consideration of the artist, and hence his difficulty in fixing an expression which shall be entirely free from the possibility of suggesting desire. For this reason no model, or series of models, will suffice the painter: he has always to bring his imagination to bear, as Raphael admitted he had to do.^[g]

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It is impossible to find a head of a woman, painted before the time of Raphael, which fulfils the requirements of art as an ideal. The figures are either too formal, or too distinctive in type, or are evidently portraits, while in many of the greatest pictures of the fifteenth century the artists had not yet learned how to put warm blood into their Madonnas. Raphael, however, after taking up his sojourn at Florence, became an object lesson for nearly every school, and ideal countenances were produced by other masters, though no painter other than Raphael succeeded with more than one or two. Nowadays the ever increasing hustle in the struggle for existence, does not lend itself to deep study and long contemplation on the part of painters, but hope springs eternal, and surely the list of immortals is not yet closed.

An ideal man of flesh and blood is not possible in the art of the painter, for there is no general conception of male beauty below the level of the god-like. Perfection of form can be given, but a supreme expression in the face of a man implies deep wisdom, and this must necessarily be associated with maturity when high sensorial beauty of feature can scarcely be expected.

FOOTNOTES:

- [a] See Plate 9.
- [b] Frick Collection, New York.⁵⁰
- [c] See Plate 8.
- [d] Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
- [e] See Plate 10.
- [f] See Frontispiece and Plate 11.
- [g] "E di belle donne, io mi servo di certa idea che mi viene nella mente." Letter to Castiglione.

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CHAPTER X

EXPRESSION. PART V.—PORTRAITURE

Limitations of the portrait painter—Generalizations—Emphasis and addition of qualities—Practice of the ancient Greeks—Dignity—Importance of simplicity—Some of the great masters—Portraiture of women—The English masters—The quality of grace—The necessity of repose.

While in the scale of the painter's art, portraiture ranks next to the higher branches of historical work, yet it is some distance behind them, for apart from the commonplace of scenic arrangement, the imagination of the portrait painter cannot be carried further than the consideration of added or eliminated details of form and expression in relation to a set subject. But these details are very difficult, and so it comes about that a good portrait involves a far greater proportion of mental labour than the result appears on the surface to warrant. It is indirectly consequent upon the complexity of his task that the work of the artist who devotes practically his whole time to portraiture, often varies so largely in quality. He paints some portraits which are generally appreciated, but as time goes on he is overwhelmed with orders which he cannot possibly fulfil without reducing the value of his work. He thus acquires a habit of throwing his whole power into his work only when the personage he represents is of public importance, or has a countenance particularly amenable to his manner or style. It is necessary that this fact should be borne in mind, otherwise erroneous standards are likely to be set up when artists like Van Dyck, Reynolds, or Romney, are referred to as examples.

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In a general sense nearly all painting where the human figure is introduced, is portraiture, and it has been so since soon after the middle of the fifteenth century, when artists commenced to use living men and women for secondary or accessory figures in sacred pictures. The increasing importance attached to the anatomy of the figure resulted in the extensive use of models, and so in a measure portraiture rose to be a leading feature in the work of the artist. The figures in the larger compositions of every kind by the greater painters of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, consist almost entirely of portraits of friends and acquaintances of the artists, the exceptions being the countenances of the Deity and Christ, which had to be modelled from accepted types, and those of the later Saints the character of whose features had been handed down by tradition. A few painters, as Raphael and Correggio, idealized the Virgin away from suggestion of portraiture, but others, as Del Sarto and Pontorno, even in this case took a wife or other relative as a model. The practice was continued by many artists in respect of central figures, till the end of the seventeenth century, after which time the identity of the figures was, as a rule, purposely lost. Nevertheless the figures, other than ideals, used in all good compositions, must necessarily be portraits or adaptations thereof, for only from life can superior representation of life be obtained.

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The first duty of the portraitist is to generalize the expression of his subject. A face seen once will be thrown upon the mind only with the particular expression observable at the moment of view. If seen a second time we involuntarily combine the effects of the dual experience, and the more often we see the countenance, the more closely will our mental picture of it correspond with the general or average expression worn. It is this average appearance that the portraitist tries to represent, emphasizing of course whatever good qualities may be indicated. The second most important task of the artist is to balance every part of the picture, so that neither setting, nor colour, nor handling, is strikingly noticeable. The portrait should appear at first glance as one complete whole, in order that the mind of the observer be immediately directed to the subject, and away from the artist or the manner of execution. The painter is limited to the actual character and physiognomy of the figure. He must make each feature harmonize with the others, and add or subtract, hide or reveal, without changing the general individuality, but he cannot do more. His scope is, therefore, strictly limited. Very naturally some of the greatest portraitists have rebelled at this limit. They appear to have painted with an eye to posterity, rather than to satisfy their patrons and the people of the time with an effective generalization of character and bearing. If we compare the portraits executed by Titian with those representing certain accessory figures in some important compositions of the great masters, as for instance,

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the School of Athens of Raphael,^[a] and the Death of St. Francis of Ghirlandaio,^[b] we find a marked difference. The latter are obviously true portraits of living men, with little accentuated or eliminated, just such portraits as Carlyle wanted from which to obtain real instruction for his biographies. Titian painted no portraits of this kind. He gives a lofty bearing to every person he portrays. His figures seem to belong to a special race of men, endowed with rare qualities of nobility and dignity, with little interest in the doings of ordinary people. Yet we know that some of his characters lived in an atmosphere of evil. We cannot really believe that the Aretino of Titian^[c] was Aretino the man, and we find it hard to imagine that Philip II.,^[d] or the Duke of Alba,^[e] as Titian painted him, could grow into the monster he proved to be. Nevertheless Titian was justified. It is not the business of the artist to consider the historian: his art is all that concerns him. Titian produced beautiful pictures which are commonly recognized as great portrayals of character; whose character matters not, though when we have data upon which to rest a judgment, we find the lineaments in his works are fully sufficient for purposes of identification.

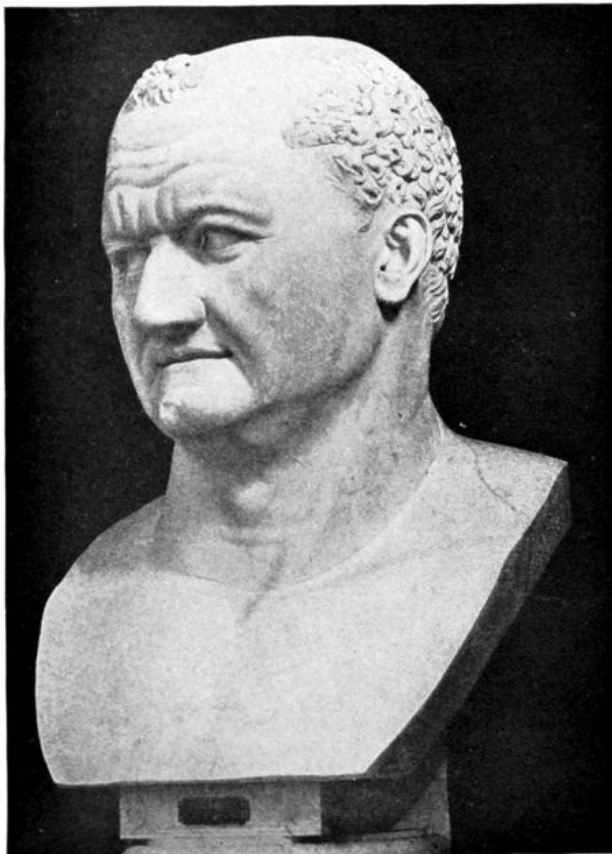
While Titian went further than any other Renaissance painter in ennobling his subjects, he did not approach the ancient Greeks in this respect. Their sculptured busts and terms represent the highest portraiture known to us. Many examples remain, mostly copies it is true, but quite fifty of them are clearly faithful reproductions, made apparently in the early days of Imperial Rome, and accord closely with the few existing originals. The Grecian portraits differ from the Roman, and all later painted or carved portraits in a most important feature.^[f] The latter aimed at what is still understood as the highest level in portraiture. They endeavoured to give a general individualism of mind and bearing, avoiding particular expression; in fact to represent character. Since the Christian era commenced neither sculptor nor painter has gone further than this, with very few exceptions in Roman days when Grecian sculptors of the time imitated the practice of the fourth and early third centuries. The earlier Greeks on the other hand not only generalized portraits in an extreme degree, but, except in the case of athletes, they altered the contour of the head and varied the actual features of the subject, so that the possession of the higher human attributes should be indicated as clearly as possible. They invariably showed a large facial angle, placed the ears well close to the head, sunk the eyes deep in their sockets, and ennobled the brows to suggest majesty or profound thought. In fact the Grecian portrait heads only differ from their sculptured gods in that particular countenances are depicted, and consequently the expression in them does not appear to be above the possibility of human experience. Apparently in Grecian times, only men who had become celebrated in some way were represented in stone, and hence the artist had features to depict which could be semi-idealized without impropriety. Even Socrates, whose ugliness was proverbial, was given a noble and dignified expression.^[g]

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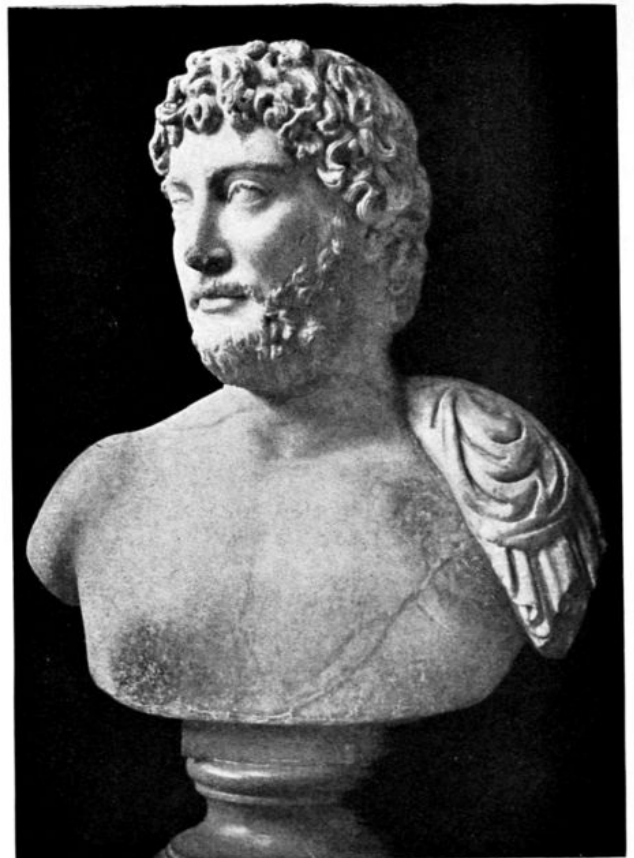
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PLATE 13

PLATE 13



Head of Vespasian



Head of Hadrian

Roman Portraiture

(See page 145)

Head of Vespasian

Roman Portraiture

Head of Hadrian

(See [page 145](#))

That the painter is at liberty to follow the example of the Greeks, there can be no question from the point of view of art, for his first object is to produce a beautiful picture; but in portraiture, practical and conventional considerations have to be met, with which other branches of painting are not concerned. With rare exceptions the portraits executed are of living persons, and extreme accentuation of high qualities would be likely to result in a representation of the sitter that would appear false to contemporary observers, though we might

well imagine that a work exhibiting this accentuation would seem to be of high excellence in the judgment of future generations. There must therefore be a line drawn in respect of added or accentuated qualities, and the position of this line would naturally vary with the celebrity of the subject and the power of the artist. Something definite may, however, be said in regard to the emphasis of certain qualities of form, and particularly of dignity, a feature that has occupied the attention of some of the greatest masters.

The question arises, how far may the artist go in imitating the manner of the stage with his portraits? On the theatrical stage formalities are required with certain characters in order to emphasize their position—to assist in the recognition of their standing or relative significance in the drama, for it is of the first importance that the audience should comprehend the meaning of the actions presented as rapidly as possible. The actor must often exaggerate life habits of pose and manner in order to heighten the contrast between two characters, or to give special significance to the words. And the elevation of the diction sometimes compels this exaggeration. In high drama where the language used is above experience of ordinary life in measure and force, there must be appropriate pose and action to accompany it, and hence a height of dignity or even majesty may appear perfectly proper on the stage, which would be ridiculous in surroundings away from it. From the practice of certain painters it would seem that they have looked upon portraiture as the transference of their subjects to the public stage as it were, so that they might appear to occupy a higher position in the drama of life than that to which they are habituated. No harm can arise from this provided the portraitist does not pass beyond the custom of the theatrical stage, where, whatever the exaggeration, the representation appears, or should appear, appropriate to the action; that is to say, where the exaggeration is not recognized as such. Accentuation of high qualities of expression, or even variations in certain physical features, such as the Greeks brought about, would not appear exaggerations in a portrait, but where dignity of form is added to such an extent that the observer immediately recognizes it as untrue to experience, then the artist goes too far. While this is so, we do not condemn Titian, Van Dyck, and the few other portrait painters who emphasized the quality of dignity of form in past times. The reason for this appears to be that the usual methods of teaching history lead us to suppose that nobles and leaders of society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who were usually the portrait subjects of the greater artists, commonly assumed a demeanour and bearing far above our own experience. At the present day, when it is a matter of universal knowledge that a formal dignified pose is very rarely assumed by any one, such a bearing in a portrait would be regarded as untrue.

The portraitist may improve the expression of his subject, adding any good quality within his power, and he may remove from the features or figure any marked physical defect, because the portrait would still appear to be correct; but if he add a strong dignified pose, then the result would be something that is possibly, but improbably accurate, and therefore inferior art. The quality of dignity should be expressed rather in the countenance than in the pose, the bearing of the form being produced as in life, for this lends assistance to the true representation of character. A dignified expression may well be appropriate to an awkward form whose personality would be undistinguished by dignity of pose.

Titian was the first great artist to give a pronounced dignity of form to his subjects, and he never varied from the practice unless the subject were exhibited in action,^[h] or too old to be represented as an upright figure.^[i] Nor did he once exaggerate the pose so that arrogance might be suggested. Though he squared the shoulders, he rarely threw back the head to emphasize the bearing,^[j] and only in one portrait is the body slightly arched as the result of the pose.^[k] In fact so careful was the artist in avoiding over-emphasis, that there is a tendency in two or three of his figures for the upper part of the body to lean a little forward.^[l] Obviously Titian gave this dignified attitude to his portrait subjects of set purpose, as in his general compositions there is no suggestion of it.⁵¹

Velasquez no doubt acquired his habit of lending dignity to his important subjects from the examples of Titian's portraits which came under his view in Spain. Except in one notable instance where the bearing is much over-emphasized,^[m] he was equally successful with the Italian master in the practice, though many of his characters are far from lending him any natural assistance. In the case of a Court Dwarf, however, the high dignity given to him by the painter seems to require explanation.^[n]

Before he went to Italy, Van Dyck followed the natural system of Rubens in posing his portrait subjects, but at Genoa he painted under the spell of Titian's memory, and thereafter during his whole life, he gave a dignified bearing to his figures whenever this was not opposed to individual traits. During his English period, when he undertook more work than he could properly accomplish, he sometimes over-emphasized the dignity of a figure by arching the body,^[o] but as a rule he produced a just balance of pose and setting, completing altogether a magnificent series of portraits which remain the astonishment of the world.

It is obviously the duty of the portraitist so to design his work that the attention of the observer is concentrated upon the countenance of the subject immediately he has grasped the whole composition, and it is in the successful accomplishment of this object that the power of Rembrandt lies. He rarely used accessories, and in only a few cases a background of any kind. He avoided portraits where an elaborate setting was required, as for instance full length standing figures, of which he only painted two^[p]; and in his many three-quarter length portraits, there is seldom more than a table or chair to be seen apart from the figure. With this simplicity of design, and with nearly all the available light directed full upon the head of the subject, the eye of the observer of the picture is necessarily centred instantaneously upon the features. These are invariably cast into bold relief by perfect management of the chiaroscuro, and the correspondence with life seems as complete as it well can be. Rembrandt thus accomplishes the aim of every great artist: he executes a faithful picture, and throws it on the mind of the observer with the maximum of rapidity. Only artists of a high order can successfully ignore a more or less elaborate setting for a portrait, particularly if it be larger than bust size. Great care has to be taken with such a setting lest the eye of the observer be attracted by the pose of the figure and the general harmony of the work before being directed to the countenance. If we take the general opinion of known portraits, so far as it can be gauged, we find that the most highly esteemed of them are: the Julius II. of Raphael, the Mona Lisa of Lionardo, the Man with the Gloves by Titian, the Old Man with a Boy by Ghirlandaio, and Innocent X. by Velasquez.^[q] All of these except Mona Lisa are remarkable for the simplicity of the setting, and in the exception the formal landscape is altogether subordinated to the figure. Raphael was the first artist who saw the value of avoiding accessories in portraiture. His half-length portraits painted after his arrival in Florence, are all free from them, and his Julius II. has only the chair on which the Pope is seated.

Rembrandt further aided the concentration of attention on the countenance of a sitter by the use of warm

inconspicuous tones in the clothing, which harmonize with all kinds of surroundings in which the picture may be seen. The colours never specially attract the eye, and the attire consequently forms so completely a part of the figure, that after an inspection of the work one can rarely describe the costume. This subordination of colour is of the highest importance in portraiture, though it is not sufficiently practised nowadays. Velasquez used quiet tones whenever possible, that is, when he was not painting great personages, and Titian, Rubens, and Van Dyck, followed the same course in half-length portraits. None of these, however, seemed so careful as Rembrandt in adapting the tones to the general character of the figure, so that the impression left on the mind of the observer should relate entirely to the personality. Rembrandt, in fact, aimed at a representation of the man, and the man only; and he gave us a natural human being of a commonly known type, with his virtues somewhat emphasized, and his faults a little veiled.

The extraordinary power of Velasquez as a portraitist was due to the same general cause operating in the case of Rembrandt, namely, extreme simplicity in design. Apart from those instances where royal or official personages had to be represented in decorative attire, every portrait of Velasquez is merely the impress of a personality. There are no accessories; the clothing is subordinated to the last degree, and there is nothing for the eye to grasp but a perfectly drawn set of features thrown into strong relief by a method of chiaroscuro unsurpassed in depth and accuracy. Thus, as in the case of Rembrandt, the portrait fulfils the first law of art—the picture is thrown on the brain in the least possible fraction of time.

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Velasquez was remarkable in a greater degree than any other artist, if we except Hals, for his facility in execution. In his brush-work he appeared to do the right thing at all times without hesitation, achieving the most perfect balance as if by instinct. So far as we can judge from those instances where his subjects were painted also by other artists, his portraits are good likenesses, but he followed the best practice in generalizing the countenance to the fullest extent. It is unfortunate that his work was confined to so poor a variety of sitters. Of his known portraits more than half represent Philip IV. or his relatives; eight others are nobles of the time, and another half dozen are dwarfs and buffoons, leaving only seventeen examples of the artist's work amongst ordinary people. There never was a weaker royal family than that of Philip IV., and it is really astonishing how Velasquez was able to produce such excellent works of art by means of their portraits. With his abnormal lips and weak face, the king himself must have been a most difficult person to ennoble, yet the painter managed in three portraits to give him a highly distinguished countenance and bearing, without in any way suggesting exaggeration.^[r] Of another weak man—Innocent X.—Velasquez painted what Reynolds described as the greatest portrait he saw in Rome; and it is truly one of the most amazing life representations ever executed.^[s] A reddish face peers out through a blaze of warm surroundings and background; a face in full relief as if cut out of apoplectic flesh—almost appalling in its verity. It is like nothing else that Velasquez painted: it overpowers with its combined strength and realism. But it is a picture to see occasionally, and admire as a great imitation. If one lived with it, the colour would hurt the eye, the unpleasant face would tire the mind. Such a face should not be painted: it should be carved in stone, where truth may be given to form without the protrusion of mortal decay. Bernini sculptured the countenance, and gave the Pope a certain majesty which no painting could present. As a life portrait the work of Velasquez is unrivalled, but as a pure work of art, it is behind the three portraits of Philip IV. already mentioned. A distinctly unhealthy face cannot be produced in portraiture without injuring the art, for it is a variety of distortion.

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Velasquez was so naturally a portraitist that apart from his actual portrait work, every figure composition he painted seems to consist merely of the portraits of a group of persons. He took little pains to connect the figures in a life action, often painting them with a look of unconcern with the proceedings around them, as if specially posing for the artist. In several of his works there are faces looking right out of the picture, and it is evident that in these the artist had little thought in his mind away from portrait presentation.^[t] The Surrender of Breda and Las Meninas,^[u] regarded generally as his best compositions, are admittedly portrait groupings, but the setting in each case is one of action, and hence the faces looking out of the picture are a great drawback, as they disrobe the illusion of a natural scene. That a man so accurate in his drawing, so perfect in his chiaroscuro, and so skilful in his brushwork, should yet be so conspicuously limited in imagination, is a problem which art historians have yet to solve.

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Franz Hals was on a level with Velasquez in respect of facility in execution, and like him seems to have been a born portraitist. His brushwork was so rapid and decisive that in scarcely any of his designs is there evidence of deliberation. He seems to have been able to take in the essential features of a subject at a glance, and to transfer them to canvas without preliminaries, producing an amazing countenance with the least possible detail. Though some of his large groups are a little stiff, this is rather through his want of capacity in invention than a set purpose of exaggeration with a view to heightening the dignity of pose, for it is obvious that Hals had little imagination, and knew nothing of the boundless possibilities of his art in general composition. He appears to have passed through life without concern for his work beyond material results, being well convinced that the magic of his execution would leave nothing further for the public to desire. In the last forty years of his life he made no advance in his art except in one respect, but the change was great, for it doubled the art value of his portraits. He learned how to subordinate his colours; how to modify his chiaroscuro in order to force the immediate attention of the observer on the countenance of his subject.⁵² Such an advance with such an artist placed him in the rank of the immortals among the portraitists.

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It will be seen that in the judgment of the greatest painters, decoration in a portrait should be altogether subordinated to the truthful representation of character, this practice being only varied when the personage portrayed is of public importance, and the portrait is required more or less as a monument. The rule is natural and reasonable, being based upon the universal agreement that the all-important part of a man comprehended by the vision is his countenance. But the rule only strictly applies to a single figure portrait, for when the painter goes beyond this, and executes a double portrait or a multiple group, he restricts the scope of his art. Other things being equal a double portrait is necessarily inferior art to a single figure picture, since the dual objective complicates the impression of the work on the brain, and the only remedy, or partial remedy, for this drawback possessed by the painter is to introduce accessories and arrange his group in a subject design. This plan results in detracting from the force of the actual portraits, as it divides the attention of the observer, but there is no help for it unless one is content with the representation of the figures in a stiff and formal way which extinguishes the pictorial effect of the work.

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The greatest artists have avoided dual or triple portrait works where possible except in cases of gatherings of members of the same family, as one of these groups may be regarded as a unity by the observer. Nevertheless in his picture of Leo X., and the two younger Medici,^[v] Raphael was careful to subordinate the cardinals so that they should appear little more than accessories in a painting of the Pope; an example which was followed not quite so successfully by Titian in his triple portrait of Paul III. with the two brothers Farnese.

[w] A group of two persons who are in some way associated with each other, though unconnected in action, rarely looks out of place, as in the pictures of father and son, or of two brothers, painted by Van Dyck, or in The Ambassadors of Holbein,^[x] but no painter has yet succeeded in producing a first-class work of art out of a multiple portrait group when the personages represented are unconnected with each other, either directly in action, or indirectly through association derived from the title. The picture of Rubens representing Lipsius and three others, would appear much more stiff and formal than it is, without one of the two titles given to it, notwithstanding the general excellence of the composition.^[y] When the figures introduced are very numerous, as in the many groups of civic organizations painted by Hals, Ravesteyn, and others, the compulsory formality seriously detracts from the æsthetic value of the works, however superior they may be in execution, or whatever the connection of the personages represented; and when we come to such crowded paintings as Terburg's Signing the Peace of Münster,^[z] we obtain but little more than a record, though it be of absorbing historical interest.

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It is observable that as a rule portraitists have been more successful with delineations of men than of women. This is to be accounted for by the necessity for subordinating the representation of character to the art in the case of women unless they have passed the prime of life; while with men the art is usually subordinated to the portrait, character being sought independently of sensorial beauty. Strictly it is the duty of the artist to make his portrait, whether of a man or a woman, sensorially attractive, but here again in portraiture custom and convention have to be considered with the rules of art. It is agreed that with a woman sensorial beauty must be produced if that be possible, even with the sacrifice of certain elements of character; but with a man the portrait must be recognized by the acquaintances of the subject as corresponding in most details with his life appearance. The future of the portrait is out of the question for the time being. Nevertheless the painter has certain advantages in dealing with the features of a man, for the presence of lines in the brow, or other evidence of experience, does not interfere with the nobility or dignity which may be added to his general bearing; but what would be lines in the countenance of a man would be wrinkles in that of a woman, because here they can scarcely be neutralized by attitude and expression which imply strength of character, without destroying what is best described as womanly charm, which is a compulsory feature in every woman's portrait. With a man therefore the portraitist considers character first and emphasizes qualities of form within his power; while with a woman, during the period of her bloom, beauty of form and feature must be the first care of the artist, unconflicting qualities of character being emphasized or added.

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All this was of course recognized by the great portraitists of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, but while most of them endeavoured to enhance the sensorial beauty of their men subjects, little attempt was made to add intellectual grace to the portrayals of women. Antonio Moro^[aa] and Van Dyck, in their full length portraits of women, sometimes succeeded in converting dignity of form into what we understand as grandeur, which implies dignity of expression as well as grace and dignity of form, but they were largely handicapped by the dress fashions of their times. They had to deal with heavy formal drapery which hung over the figures like elongated bells, and bid defiance to freedom of pose. When fashions and customs had so changed as to allow of definition being given to the figures, Van Dyck had been dead for many years. Meanwhile Hals, Rembrandt, Velasquez, and hundreds of lesser lights, were casting around their flowers of form and mind, but all on the old plan, for it is difficult to find a portrait of a woman painted during the century succeeding Van Dyck, where beauty of feature is allied to nobility in expression.

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PLATE 14



Sacrifice of Iphigenia (Pompeian Fresco)

(See page 168)

Supposed copy of a painting by Timanthes

Sacrifice of Iphigenia (Pompeian Fresco) Supposed copy of a painting by Timanthes

(See [page 168](#))

The production of this combination awaited the maturity of Reynolds, who with Gainsborough, broke into a new field in the portraiture of women. Gainsborough took the grandeur of Van Dyck for his pattern, but improved upon it by substituting simplicity for dignity and elaboration, which he was able to manage without great difficulty, as he had a clear advantage over the Flemish master in that the costumes in use in his time were lighter in character, and permitted of the contour of form being properly exhibited. This simple grace of form allied to grandeur in bearing, naturally brings about an apparent modification in expression in conformity with it, so long as there are no conflicting elements in expression present, which Gainsborough was careful to avoid. Reynolds went further than Gainsborough, for after the middle of his career he directly added an expression of nobility to his portraits of women whenever the features would admit of it, and so brought about the highest type of feminine portraiture known in art. He was more nearly allied to Titian than Van Dyck, and though in sheer force of sensorial beauty he did not reach the level of the Venetian master, yet in pure feminine portraiture, where high beauty of expression is combined with a perfect generalization of the features, Reynolds is unsurpassed in the history of painting, so far as we can judge from examples remaining to us. For we must estimate an artist from his best work. Reynolds painted forty or fifty portraits of women of the character indicated, and a few of them, notably Mrs. Siddons as Tragedy,^[ab] and Mrs. Billington as St. Cecilia,^[ac] are amongst the most luminous examples of feminine portraiture in existence. There are many artists who equalled Reynolds in the representation of men, but there are very few indeed who even attempted to strike a just balance between sensorial and intellectual effects in the countenance of a woman.

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With such great leaders as Reynolds and Gainsborough, it might have been hoped that the school they founded in portraiture would have taken a long lease of life, but it rapidly died away, leaving very few indeed of footsteps sunk deep in the sands of glory, save those of Raeburn, Hoppner, Lawrence, and Romney. But between Reynolds and Romney there is a wide gulf, for while the former sought for his beauty among the higher gifts of nature, Romney, with rare exceptions, was content with a formal expression allied to grace of pose. We may shortly consider this graceful attitude for it seems to be often regarded as an all-sufficing

The charm of grace lies chiefly in movement, and a graceful attitude in repose implies rest from graceful movement, but this attitude is ephemeral in nature, for if prolonged it quickly becomes an artificial pose. In art therefore, a graceful pose, whether exhibited in action or at rest, must soon tire unless attractive expression be present to deepen the impress of the work upon the mind of the observer. The general æsthetic value of graceful form in a painted figure varies with the scale to which the figure is drawn. With a heroic figure, grace is of the smallest importance; in one of life size, as a portrait for instance, the quality is of considerable assisting value; and as the scale is diminished, so does the relative value of grace increase. This is because details of expression can be less truthfully rendered in small figures than in those of life size, while in miniature figures certain high qualities of expression, as nobility, or a combined expression of mind and form, as grandeur, can be scarcely indicated at all, so that purely sensorial beauty, as that arising from grace of pose, becomes of comparatively vast importance. This was well understood in ancient times. The Grecian sculptured life-size figures are nearly always graceful, but the grace arises naturally from perfection of form and expression, and not from a specially added quality, a particular grace of pose being always subordinated, if present at all. On the other hand, in the smaller Grecian figures, such as those found at Tanagra and in Asia Minor, anything in expression beyond regularity of features is not attempted, but grace is always present, and it is entirely upon this that the beauty of the figurines depends. We may presume from the frescoes opened out at Pompeii, that the ancients were well aware of the value and limitations of grace in art. In all these decorations where the figures are of a general type, as fauns, bacchantes, nereids, dancers, and so on, they are represented in motion, flying drapery being skilfully used to provide illusion. Grace is the highest quality evident in these forms, while the expression is invariably negative. For pure wall decorations, which are observed in a casual way, a high quality of grace such as these frescoes provide is all-sufficient, but as with the Greeks, the Romans did not make grace a leading feature in serious art.

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With the great painters of the Renaissance, nobility, grandeur, and general perfection of form and expression, though necessarily implying a certain grace in demeanour, altogether dwarfed the feature of grace of pose. In the seventeenth century, grace was subordinated to dignity of form in the case of Van Dyck and Velasquez, and to actual life experience with Rubens and Rembrandt. When either of these last two added a quality of form to their figures, it was always dignity and not grace. Murillo was the first Spanish painter to pay particular attention to the grace of his figures, but he never gave it predominance. The French masters of the period, Le Brun, Le Sueur, Poussin, Mignard, and Rigaud, leaned too closely to classical traditions to permit of grace playing a leading part in their designs, though some of slightly lesser fame as Noel and Antoine Coppel, appeared to attribute considerable value to the quality. It was during this century in Italy that grace first appeared as a prominent feature in figure painting. In his pastoral and classical scenes, Albani seems to have largely relied upon it for his beauty, and Cignani, Andrea Sacchi, Sassoferrato, and others followed in his footsteps in this respect, though up to the end of the century no attempt was made in portraiture to sacrifice other features to grace of pose. Rosalba then made her appearance as a portraitist, and she was the first to rest the entire beauty of her work on sensorial charm of feature and grace of pose. She developed a weakened school in France which culminated with Nattier; and in England, Angelica Kauffmann, and some miniature painters, notably Cosway and Humphrey, took up her system for their life-size portraits, while many artists "in small" as Cipriani and Bartolozzi, assisted in forming a cult of the style. But of the greater British painters, only Romney gave high importance to grace of pose in portraits of women. It is safer for an artist to eschew grace of pose altogether than to sacrifice higher qualities to it. A little added dignity is always preferable to a graceful attitude in a portrait, because in nature it is not so evanescent a feature. Grace is a good assisting quality, but an inferior substitute.

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The greatest repose possible is necessary in a portrait, as a suggestion of action tends to draw the attention of the observer to it, thus impeding the impression of the whole upon his mind. The leading portraitists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries never erred in this matter, unless we except a single work by Titian—the portrait group of Paul III. and the Cardinals Farnese, where the last named has just arrived and is apparently in the act of bowing before completing his final step; but even here it may be fairly argued that a moment of rest between two parts of the final action is to be presumed. It was not an uncommon practice of Van Dyck to pose a subject arrested in the act of walking, or with one foot on the lowest step of a stairway as if about to ascend; but in each of these instances the head is turned, and it is obvious that the motion is temporarily stayed.^[ad] A similar pose was sometimes adopted by British artists of the eighteenth century with conspicuous success. If a portrait figure be painted in the act of walking on level ground, the feet must be together even if the moment represented be that between two steps in the action, because it is contrary to all experience for a man to rest while so walking, with one foot in front of the other. In a general composition the representation of a man walking with the feet separated is permissible, because it is part of a general action, and accessory in its nature, but in a portrait the beginning and end of the action depicted are usually unknown, and hence any action must be meaningless and disturbing to the observer.^[ae]

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The French and English artists of the eighteenth century followed the practice of their predecessors in avoiding the exhibition of movement in their portraits, but occasionally they departed from the rule. In his fine portrait of Mrs. Thomas Raikes, Romney shows the lady playing a harpsichord, with the fingers apparently in motion; and in his group of the Ladies Spencer, one of them is fingering a harp. The result in each case is a stiff attitude which detracts from the beauty of the work. Van Dyck managed such a design in a much better way, for in his portrait of his wife with a cello, she holds the bow distinctly at rest.^[af] Titian also, when representing a man at an organ, shows his hands stayed, while turning his head.^[ag] Reynolds moved aside once from the custom in respect of action,^[ah] and Raeburn seems also to have erred only on a single occasion.^[ai]

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FOOTNOTES:

[a] At the Vatican.

[b] Fresco at Santa Trinita, Florence.

[c] Frick Collection, N. Y.

[d] The Padro, Madrid, and elsewhere.

[e] Huescar Coll., Madrid.

[f] See Plates 12 and 13.

- [g] See heads in the National Museums of Rome and Naples.
- [h] Portrait of his daughter, Berlin Gallery, and of Jacopo di Strada at Vienna.
- [i] Paul III. at Naples, and his own portrait at the Uffizi Gallery.
- [j] An exception is Charles V. at Mühlberg, Prado, Madrid.
- [k] Portrait of his daughter as a bride, at Dresden.
- [l] Notably in the portrait of the Duke of Ferrara, Pitti Palace.
- [m] Count-Duke Olivares, Holford, Coll., London.
- [n] Don Antonio el Ingles, Prado.
- [o] Earl of Newport, Northbrook Coll., England; Earl of Bedford Spencer Coll.; and Queen Henrietta (three-quarter length), Windsor Castle.
- [p] Martin Day and Machteld van Doorn, both in Gustave Rothschild Coll., Paris.
- [q] The first at the Pitti Palace, the last at the Doria Gallery, and the others at the Louvre.
- [r] The full example at the Prado; the Parma full length, in the Frick Coll., N. Y.; and the three-quarter length portrait at the Imperial Gallery, Vienna.
- [s] In the Doria Gallery, Rome.
- [t] See The Breakfast, Hermitage; Christ in the House of Martha, National Gallery, London; and The Drinkers, Prado.
- [u] Both at the Prado.
- [v] Pitti Palace, Florence.
- [w] Naples Museum.
- [x] National Gallery, London.
- [y] The Four Philosophers, or Lipsius and his Disciples, Pitti Palace.
- [z] National Gallery, London.
- [aa] Catilina of Portugal, and Maria of Austria, both at the Prado.
- [ab] Westminster Coll., London.
- [ac] New York Public Library.
- [ad] See Earl of Pembroke, Wilton Coll., Countess of Devonshire, Chatsworth, and Philip le Roy, Wallace Coll., all in England.
- [ae] See Chase's Master Roland, private Coll., N. Y.; and Manet's Boy with a Sword, Met. Museum, N. Y.
- [af] Munich Gallery.
- [ag] Venus and the Organ Player, Prado.
- [ah] Viscountess Crosbie, Tennant Coll., London.
- [ai] Dr. Nathaniel Spens, Royal Co. of Archers, Edinburgh.

CHAPTER XI

EXPRESSION. PART VI—MISCELLANEOUS

Grief—The smile—The open mouth—Contrasts—Representation of death.

The painter has ever to be on his guard against over-emphasis of facial expression. His first object is to present an immediately intelligible composition, and this being accomplished, much has already been done towards providing appropriate expressions for his characters. It has been seen that attitude alone may appear to lend to a countenance suitable expression which is not observed when the head of the figure is considered separately; and while such a condition is not frequent, its possibility indicates that the painter is warranted in relying more or less upon the details of his action for conveying the state of mind of the personages concerned therein. It is not the purpose here to deal with the various forms of expression that may be of use to the painter, nor indeed is it necessary. The work of Raphael alone leaves little to be learned in respect of the expression of emotion so far as it may be exhibited in a painting⁵⁴; but there are a few matters in relation to the subject which appear to require attention, judging from experience of modern painting, and short notes upon them are here given.

GRIEF

Intense grief is the most difficult expression to depict in the whole art of painting, because in nature it usually results in distortion of the features, which the artist must avoid at all cost. Of the thousands of paintings of scenes relating to the Crucifixion, where the Virgin is presumed to be in great agony at the foot of the Cross, very rarely has an artist attempted to portray this agony in realistic manner.^[a] He generally substitutes for grief an expression of sorrow which is produced without contraction of the features. This expression, which is invariably accompanied with extreme pallor, does not prevent the addition of a certain nobility to the countenance, and hence no suggestion of insufficiency arises in the mind of the observer. But the sublime expression which may be given to the Virgin would be out of place in her attendants who are not

infrequently made hideous through attempts to represent them as overcome with grief.

A method of avoiding the difficulty is to conceal the face of the personage presumed to be suffering from grief. Timanthes is recorded by Pliny as having painted a picture of the Sacrifice of Iphigenia in which the head of Agamemnon was completely covered by his robe; and a picture of the same subject in a Pompeian fresco represents the Grecian monarch hiding his face with his right hand, while the left gathers up his robe.

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[b] This invention was the subject of considerable discussion in Europe in the eighteenth century, in which Reynolds, Falconet, Lessing, and others took part. Reynolds said of the device that an artist might use it once, but if he did so a second time, he would be justly suspected of improperly evading difficulties. Falconet compared the action of Timanthes to that of a poet who avoided expressing certain sentiments on the ground that the action of his hero was above anything that could be said^[c]; while Lessing held that the grief which overcame Agamemnon could only find expression in distortion, and hence the artist was right in covering the face.^[d] Unquestionably Lessing was justified, for nothing more is demanded of the painter than to impress the imagination of the observer with the intensity of the grief depicted, and in this he succeeds. Obviously the poet is in a different position from the painter because he can express deep grief easily enough without suggesting distortion of the features.

The artifice of Timanthes was practically unused during the Renaissance, though Botticelli once conceals the face of a woman lamenting over the body of Christ,^[e] and Richardson quotes a drawing by Polidoro where the Virgin hides her face in drapery in a lamentation scene. In Flanders at a little earlier period, Roger van der Weyden used the device,^[f] and the Maître de Flémalle shows St. John turning his head away and holding his hand to his face in a Crucifixion scene.^[g] In the succeeding centuries little was known of the practice, but quite lately it has come into use again. Boecklin painted a Pietà in which the Virgin has thrown herself over the dead body of Christ in an agony of grief, her whole form being covered by a cloak. Feuerbach has a somewhat similar arrangement, and in a picture of the Departure of Jason, he hides the face of an attendant of Medea, a plan adopted in two or three frescoes of the subject at Pompeii. Prud'hon, in a Crucifixion scene, hides the face of the Magdalene in her hands, and Kaulbach in his Marguerite so bends her head that her face is completely concealed from the observer. Where the face cannot altogether be hidden owing to the character of the design, it is sometimes thrown into so deep a shade that the features are indistinguishable, this being an excellent device for symbolical figures typifying great anguish.^[h]

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It is not a good plan in a tragic design merely to turn the head away to indicate grief or sorrow, because in such a case the artist is unable to differentiate between a person experiencing intense grief, and one who turns his head from horror of the tragedy.^[i] The scheme of half veiling the face is not often successful, since the depth of emotion that would be presumed from such an action may be more than counterbalanced by the very limited feeling which can be indicated by the part of the face remaining exposed. On account of a neutralizing effect of this kind, Loefftz's fine picture of the Dead Christ at Munich is much weakened, for there is no stronger expression on the part of the Virgin than patient resignation. Sorrow may well be displayed by semi-concealment of the features, because here the necessary expression may be produced by the eyes alone.^[j] In ancient art, to half conceal the face indicated discretion, as in the case of a Pompeian fresco where a nurse of the young Neptune, handing him over to a shepherd for education, has her mouth and chin covered, the meaning of this being that she is acquainted with the high birth of the boy, but must not reveal it.

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THE SMILE

A pronounced smile in nature is always transitory, and hence should be avoided when possible in a painting. The only smile that does not tire is that which is so faint as to appear to be permanent in the expression, and it has been the aim of many painters to produce this smile. An examination of numerous pictures where a smile is expressed in the countenance has convinced the writer that when either the eyes alone, or the eyes and mouth together, are used to indicate a smile, it is invariably over-pronounced as a suggestive permanent feature, and that in every case of such permanence, success arises from work on the mouth alone.

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The permanent smile was not studied in Europe till the Milanese school was founded, and in this nearly every artist gave his attention to it, following the example of Lionardo. This great master, who was well acquainted with the principles of art, is not likely to have had in his mind an evanescent expression when he experimented with the smile, and one can hardly understand therefore why this feature is almost invariably over-emphasized in his works. In his portrayal of women he used both eyes and mouth to bring about the smile.^[k] and more commonly than not paid most attention to the eyes. Perhaps he had in view the production of a permanent smile solely by means of the eyes, which play so great a part in general expression. In nature it is physically impossible for a smile to be produced without a faint variation in the mouth line, while the lower eyelids may remain perfectly free from any change in light and shade, even with a smile more pronounced than is necessary for apparent permanence. In the Mona Lisa at Boston,⁵⁶ the smile is very faintly indicated by the eyes, and most pronounced at the mouth, while in the famous Paris picture, the eyes are chiefly responsible for the smile, the mouth only slightly assisting.⁵⁷ Many smiling faces were produced by others of the Milanese school, and as a rule the mouth only was used, often with complete success, notably by B. Luini,^[l] Pedrini,^[m] and Ferrari.^[n] Raphael never used the eyes to assist in producing a smile, except with the Child Christ,^[o] and in all cases where he exhibits a smile in a Madonna^[p] or portrait,^[q] it appears definitely permanent. As a rule the great artists of the Renaissance other than the disciples of Lionardo, rarely produced a smile with the intention of suggesting a permanently happy expression, and in the seventeenth century little attention was given to it.

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The great French portraitists of the eighteenth century frequently made the smile a feature in expression, and a few of them, notably La Tour, seldom produced a countenance without one. In most cases the smile is a little too pronounced for permanence, but there are many examples of a faint and delicate smile which may well suggest an habitual condition. Rigaud's Louis XV. as a Boy is an instance,^[r] though here the illusion quickly passes when we bring to mind the other portraits of the monarch. Nattier,^[s] Boucher,^[t] Dumont le Romain,^[u] Perronneau,^[v] Chardin, Roslin, and others, sometimes succeeded, but the French master of the smile was La Tour who executed quite a dozen examples which Lionardo might have envied.^[w] Of British artists Romney was the most adept in producing a permanent smile,^[x] but strange to say there is no instance

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of one in his many portraits of Lady Hamilton, beyond her representation as a bacchante.^[y] Here the smile is far too pronounced for a plain portrait, but a bacchante may reasonably be supposed to be ever engaged in scenes of pleasure, and hence the feature does not seem to be out of place. Reynolds commonly used both eyes and mouth in creating his smiles,^[z] but Raeburn was nearly equal to Romney in the number of his felicitous smiles, while he seldom exceeded the minimum expression required for permanence.^[aa] Gainsborough produced a few portraits of women with a vague furtive smile, sweet and expressive beyond degree.^[ab] They are invariably brought about by a faint curvature of the mouth line.

THE OPEN MOUTH

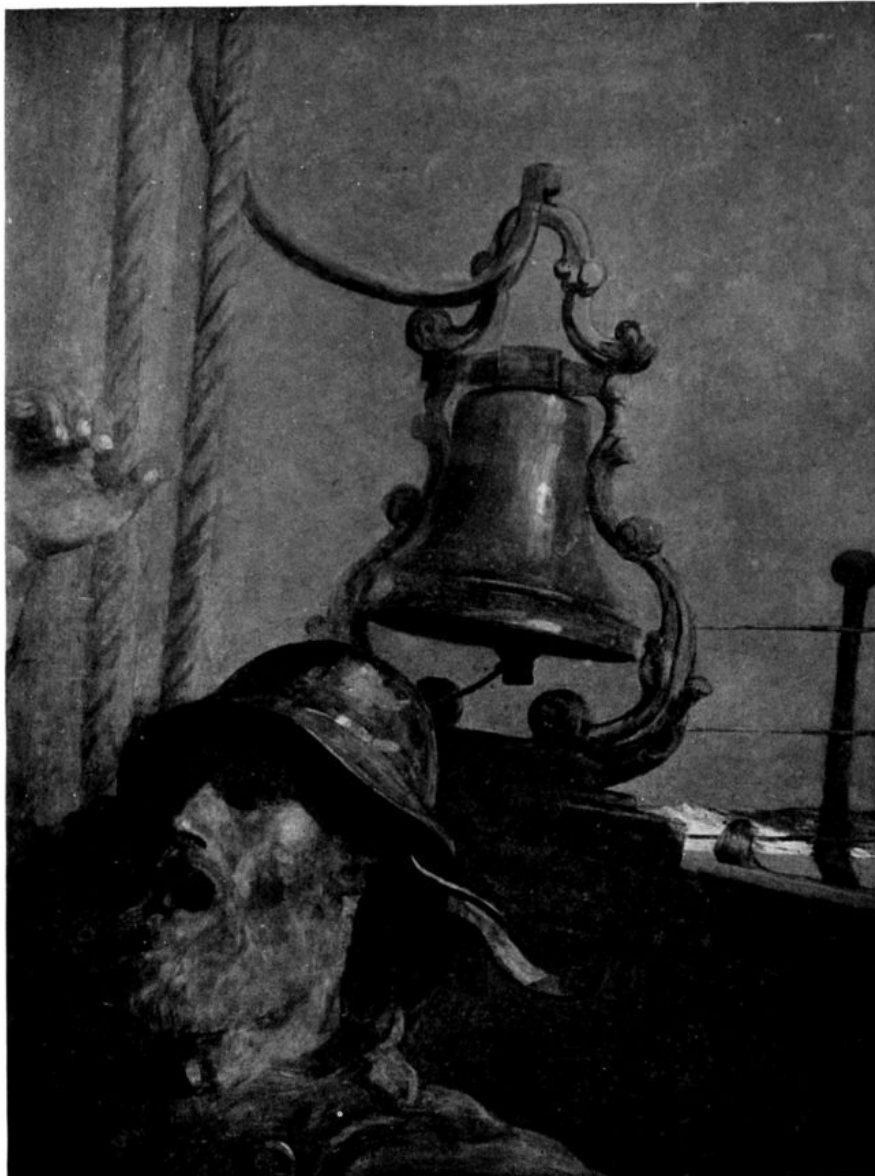
If there be one transient feature more than another which should be avoided in a painting, and particularly in the principal figure, it is a wide-open mouth. Necessarily, after a short acquaintance with a picture containing such a feature, either the mouth appears to be kept open by a wedge, or, as in the case of a laugh, the face is likely to wear an abnormal expression approaching to idiocy, for it is altogether contrary to experience of normal persons in real life, for a mouth to be kept open longer than for an instant or two. Hence the first artists have studiously refrained from exhibiting a wide-open mouth, or indeed one that is open at all except to such an extent that the parted lips appear a permanent condition. But a few great men have erred in the matter. Thus, Mantegna shows the child Christ with the mouth widely open in a half-vacant and half-startled expression, which is immediately repelling.^[ac] Dosso Dossi has several pictures much injured by the feature,^[ad] and in Ercole di Roberti's Concert, no less than three mouths are wide open.^[ae] One of the figures in Velasquez's Three Musicians opens his mouth far too widely,^[af] while Hals has half a dozen pictures with the defect.^[ag] A rare mistake was made by Carlo Dolci when showing Christ with His mouth open wide in the act of utterance,^[ah] and Mengs erred similarly in St. John Baptist Preaching.^[ai] In more modern times the fault is seldom noticeable among artists of repute, though occasionally a bad example occurs, as in Winslow Homer's All's Well.^[aj] Even when an open mouth seems unavoidable, the effect is by no means neutralized.^[ak]

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PLATE 15

PLATE 15



Winslow Homer's All's Well
(Boston Museum)

(See page 176)

When the blemish is in an accessory figure, it is of lesser importance as there it becomes an incidental circumstance on the mind of the observer. Thus, in Reynolds's *Infant Hercules*, where Alcmena, on seeing the child holding the snakes, opens her mouth with surprise and alarm, the action of the central figure is so strong that the importance of the others present is comparatively insignificant.^[al] Nevertheless in a Pompeian fresco of the same subject, care has been taken to close the mouth of Alcmena. Where the design represents several persons singing, it is well possible to indicate the action without showing the mouths open, as in Raphael's *St. Cecilia*.^[am] In a picture of a like subject, with the Saint in the centre of a group of five singers, Domenichino shows only the two outside figures with open mouths, and one of these is in profile. There are several works where David is seen singing to the accompaniment of a harp, but though his mouth is open, the figure is in profile, and the lips are hidden by moustache and beard.^[an]

It may be observed, however, that in certain cases artificial conditions may render an open mouth in a picture of comparatively little significance. A painted laugh for instance may only become objectionable to the observer when the work is constantly before him; but when it is in a picture gallery and he sees it but rarely, the lasting character of the feature is not presented to his mind. The *Laughing Cavalier* of Franz Hals, though violating the principle, does not appear in bad taste to the average visitor to the Wallace Collection. In the case of Rembrandt's portrait of himself with Saskia on his knee, where the artist has his lips parted in the act of laughing, there is an additional reason why the transient expression should not tire. Because of the number of self-portraits he painted, the countenance of Rembrandt is quite familiar to most picture gallery visitors, and to these the laugh in the Dresden picture could not possibly pass as an habitual expression.

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CONTRASTS

Designs specially built up for the purpose of contrasting two or more attributes or conditions are almost invariably uninteresting unless the motive be hidden behind a definite action which appears to control the scheme. This is because of the difficulty of otherwise connecting the personages contrasted in a particular action of common understanding. A design of Hercules and Omphale affords a superior contrast of strength and beauty to a composition of Strength and Wisdom. In each case a herculean figure and a lovely woman represent the respective qualities, but in the first the figures are connected by expression and action, and in the second no connection can be established. So in contrasting beauty of mind with that of form, this is much better represented by such a subject as Hippocrates and the *Bride of Perdiccas* than in the Venetian manner of figures unconnected in the design. And in respect of conditions, Frith's picture of *Poverty and Wealth*, where a carriage full of fashionable women drives through a poor section of London, has little more than a topographical interest, but in a subject such as *The First Visit of Croesus to Æsop*, the contrast between poverty and wealth would deeply strike the imagination.

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In contrasts of good and evil, vice and virtue, and similar subjects, it is inferior art to represent the evil character by an ugly figure. As elsewhere pointed out, deformity of any kind injures the æsthetic value of a picture because it tends to neutralize the pleasurable feeling derived from the beauty present. The poet may join physical deformity with beauty because he can minimize the defect with words, but the painter has no such recourse.⁵⁸ A deformed personage in a composition is therefore to be deprecated unless as a necessary accessory in a historical work, in which case he must be subordinated to the fullest extent possible. The figure of Satan, of an exaggerated satyr type, has often been introduced into subjects such as the *Temptation of Christ*, though not by artists of the first rank.^[ao] Such pictures do not live as high class works of art however they be painted. Correggio makes a contrast of Vice and Virtue in two paintings,^[ap] representing Vice by a man bound, but usually in the mature time of the Renaissance, Vice was shown as a woman, either beautiful in features, or with her face partly hidden, various accessories indicating her character. A notable exception is Salvati's *Justice* where a hideous old woman takes the rôle of Vice.^[aq] Even in cases where a witch has to be introduced, as in representations of *Samuel's Curse*, it is not necessary to follow the example of *Salvator Rosa*, and render her with deformed features, for there are several excellent works where this defect is avoided.^[ar]

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An effective design with the purpose of contrasting the ages of man is not possible, firstly, because the number of ages represented must be very limited, and, secondly, for the reason that the figures cannot be connected together in a free and easy manner. Hence all such pictures have been failures, though a few great artists have attempted the subject. Titian tried it with two children, a young couple, and an old man, assorting the personages casually in a landscape without attempting to connect them together in action.^[as] At about the same time Lotto produced a contrast, also with three ages represented, namely, a boy, a young man, and an elderly man.^[at] These personages sit together as if they had been photographed for the purpose, without a ray of intelligence passing between them. But this is far better than Grien's *Three Ages*,^[au] for here the artist has strangely confused life and death, exhibiting a grown maiden, a middle-aged woman, and a skin-coated skeleton holding an hour-glass. The best design of the subject is Van Dyck's *Four Ages*.^[av] He shows a child asleep near a young woman who is selling flowers to a soldier, and an old man is in the background. There is thus a presumed connection between three of the personages, but naturally the composition is somewhat stiff. The only other design worth mentioning is by Boecklin, who also represents four ages.^[aw] Two children play in the background of a landscape; a little farther back is a young woman; then a cavalier on horseback; and finally on the top of an arch an old man whom Death in the form of a skeleton is about to strike. But here again there is no connection between the figures, the consequent formality half destroying the æsthetic value of the work. From these examples than which there is none better, it may be gauged that it is hopeless to expect a good design from a subject where the ages of man are contrasted. If represented at all, the ages should be contrasted in separate pictures, as Lancret painted them.

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The practice of presenting nude with clothed figures where the subject does not absolutely compel it, is commonly supposed to be for the purpose of contrast. This may have been the object in some cases, but in very few is the interest in the contrast not outweighed by the bizarre appearance of the work. As a rule in these pictures there is nothing in the expressions or actions of the personages depicted to suggest a reason for the absence of clothes from some of them, and so to the average observer they form a "problem" class of

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painting. The first important work of the kind executed was Sebastiano del Piombo's Concert, in which the group consists of two nude women, one with a reed pipe, and two men attired in Venetian costume, of whom one handles a guitar.^[ax] The figures are very beautiful and the landscape is superb, but as one cannot account for the nude figures in an open-air musical party, the æsthetic value of the work is largely diminished. This painting has suggested several designs to modern artists, the most notable being Manet's Déjeuner sur l'Herbe, where a couple of nude women with two men dressed in modern clothes are shown in a picnic on the grass. Not only is the scheme inexplicable, but the invention is so extravagant as to provoke the lowest of suggestions. In a composition of this kind only a great artist can build up a harmonious design.

Titian's picture known as Sacred and Profane Love,^[ay] where the figure of a nude woman is opposed to one clothed, may really signify any of a dozen ideas, but the artist probably had no other scheme in his mind than to represent different types of beautiful women. Crowe and Cavalcaselli's suggested title of L'Amour ingénu et l'Amour satisfait, was certainly never conceived by Titian, nor is Burckhardt's proposal, Love and Prudery, possible in view of the flowers in the hand of the draped figure. In any case this picture is the greatest of its kind, for the composition is so delicate and harmonious, and the art so perfect, as to render its precise meaning a matter of little consideration. Another picture of Sacred and Profane Love was painted by Grien.^[az] He shows a nude woman from whom Cupid has just drawn the drapery, and another woman concealing her figure with loose drapery. The effect is weak. The nude figures in the well-known Drinkers of Velasquez^[ba] are undisturbing because they are not very prominent in the picture, but their significance is not apparent.

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No one has yet properly explained the meaning of the nude male figures standing at ease in the background of Michelangelo's celebrated Holy Family.^[bb] They are apparently pagan gods, and it is suggested that the artist intended to signify the overthrow of the Grecian deities by the coming of Christ. Such an explanation might be possible with another painter, but it does not accord with our conception of the mind of Michelangelo. A still greater puzzle is offered by Luca Signorelli who, in the landscape background of the bust portrait of a man, shows two nude men to the right of the portrait, and two attired women at the left.^[bc] It is impossible to suggest any meaning of this extraordinary invention.

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THE REPRESENTATION OF DEATH

Death is a subject inappropriate to the art of painting except where it is dealt with symbolically or as an historical incident. Naturally in either of these cases any realistic representation of death, or of distortion connected therewith, should be studiously avoided. For while many aspects of death may not be unpleasant to the senses, its actual presence—the cold immobility; the pulseless soulless, decaying thing; the appalling mirror of our own fate—these things are most unpleasant, and hence should have no place in painting. In sculpture, represented in a certain way, death is admissible, for in marble or bronze a body may be carved indicating only the eternal composure of a beautiful form. This is how the Greeks showed death, whether in the case of a warrior fallen on the battlefield, or as the twin brother of Sleep. But the painter is less fortunate: for him death is decay.

The presence of so many scenes of death in the paintings of the past was the result of accident. For a long while after the dawn of the Renaissance, those controlling churches and other religious institutions of the Christians were the chief and almost the only patrons of art, and they required paintings as well for didactic purposes as for decoration. For some time pictures often took the place of writing, where comparatively few could read, in the inculcation of Christian doctrines and history, and they were largely used as images before which people could kneel in prayer. The most important facts bearing upon Christian faith are concerned with death, and so there have been accumulated thousands of paintings of scenes of the Crucifixion, the deathbeds of saints, instances of martyrdom, and so on. While these paintings have been highly useful as tending to invite reverence for a sublime creed, it would be injurious to suggest that generally they take a high place in art. Some of them do, but the very large number of them which indicate dying agony, or recent death with all its mortal changes, must not be approved from a strict art point of view, for any beauty which may be present apart from the subject is instantly neutralized by the pain and horror arising from the invention. But it is evidently unnecessary to produce such pictures, even in the case of the Crucifixion, for there are ample works in existence to show that the face and body of Christ can be so presented as to be free from indications of physical suffering or decay.

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But if we are to protest against designs exhibiting forbidding aspects of death in sacred works, what can we say of the pictures of executions, massacres, plagues, and so on, which ever and again have been produced since the middle of the nineteenth century? Deeds of heroism or self-sacrifice on the battlefield where bodies of the fallen may be outlined are well, but simple wholesale murders as presented by Benjamin-Constant, Heim, and fifty others, where the motive does not pretend to be anything else than massacre or other ghastly event, can only live as examples of degraded art. There may be something said for Verestchagin, who painted heaps of heads and skulls, and scattered corpses, in order to show the evils of war, but if the arts are to be used at all for such a purpose, the poet or orator would be much more impressive because he could veil the hideous side of the subject with pathos and imagery, and further differentiate between just and unjust wars. The painter is powerless to do these things. He can only represent the horrors of war by depicting horrible things which is entirely beyond the province of his art. The purpose of art is to give pleasure, and if the design descend below the line where displeasure begins, then the art is no more.

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How easy it is for the æsthetic value of a picture to be lowered by the representation of a corpse, is shown in three celebrated paintings—the anatomical works of Rembrandt^[bd] and De Keyser.^[be] Probably these works were ordered to honour the surgeons or schools concerned, but the object would have been better served by a composition such as Eakin's Dr. Cross's Surgical Clinic.^[bf] Here the leading figure is also giving a lesson to students, and practical demonstration is proceeding, but there is no skeleton or corpse to damage the picture. Fromentin said that the Tulp work left him very cold,^[bg] and although he endeavoured to find technical ground for this, it is more than likely that the principal reason lay in the involuntary mental disturbance brought about by the corpse. Another fine design largely injured by corporeal evidence of death is Ingres's (Edipus and the Sphinx,^[bh] where a foot rises out of a hole in the rock near the Sphinx, the presumption of course being that the body of a man who had failed with the riddle had lately been thrown there. The invention is most deplorable in such a picture.

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The use of a skeleton as a symbol of death in painting seems to have been unusual during the Renaissance till towards the end of the fifteenth century. The earliest artist of note in this period to adopt it, was Jean

Prevost who represented a man taking a letter from a skeleton without seeing the messenger.^[bi] Then came Grien who painted three works of the kind. In the first Death holds an hour-glass at the back of a woman, and points to the position of the sand^[bj]; in the second the bony figure has clutched a girl by the hair^[bk]; and the third represents a skeleton apparently kissing a girl.^[bl] They are all hideous works, and might well have acted as a warning to succeeding artists. After Grien the use of a skeleton in design was practically confined to the smaller German masters till the middle of the second half of the sixteenth century, when it disappeared from serious work. From this time on, for the next three centuries artists of repute rarely introduced a skeleton into a painting, though it is to be found occasionally in engravings. One might have supposed that the unsightly form had been abandoned with the imps, evil spirits, and other crudities of past days, but it was not to be. The search for novelties in recent times has only resulted in the resuscitation of bygone eccentricities, and we must not be surprised that the skeleton is amongst them.

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Modern artists have displayed considerable ingenuity in the use of the skeleton, but the results have necessarily only succeeded in degrading the art. Rethel figures a skeleton in the costume of a monk who is ringing a bell at a dance.^[bm] Several of the dancers have fallen dead, apparently from plague, and the whole scene is ghastly. Henneberg has a Fortune allegory in which Death is about to seize a horseman who is chasing a nude woman,^[bn] this design being a slight modification of a variety of prints executed in the sixteenth century. Thoma uses a skeleton in a most bizarre manner. He substitutes it for the serpent in a picture of Adam and Eve,^[bo] and in another work associates it with Cupid.^[bp] Two lovers are talking, and Death stands behind the woman whose hat Cupid is lifting. A terrible picture with a political bearing was painted by Uhde.^[bq] It represents a crowd of revolutionists rushing towards a bridge, while a skeleton in modern costume waves a sword and cheers them on. These instances suffice to indicate the difficulty in the production of a fine work of art with so hideous a form as a skeleton thrown into prominence.

How simply one may avoid the introduction of a skeleton in a design concerned with death, is shown by an example where three artists deal with the same motive—Death, the Friend. The first composition shows an old man sitting dead in a chair while a skeleton costumed as a monk, tolls a bell^[br]; in the second there is also an old man in a chair, but an Angel with a scythe is substituted for the skeleton^[bs]; in the third an Angel with huge folded wings forming an oval framework for her figure, leans over the body of a child which has its face hidden.^[bt] The second design is a vast improvement over the first, but the third is incomparably the best of the three. It may be remarked that a scythe is too trivial an emblem for the Angel of Death, for whom indeed an emblem of any kind is only admissible when Death is represented as the result of eternal justice, in which case a flaming sword is appropriate.

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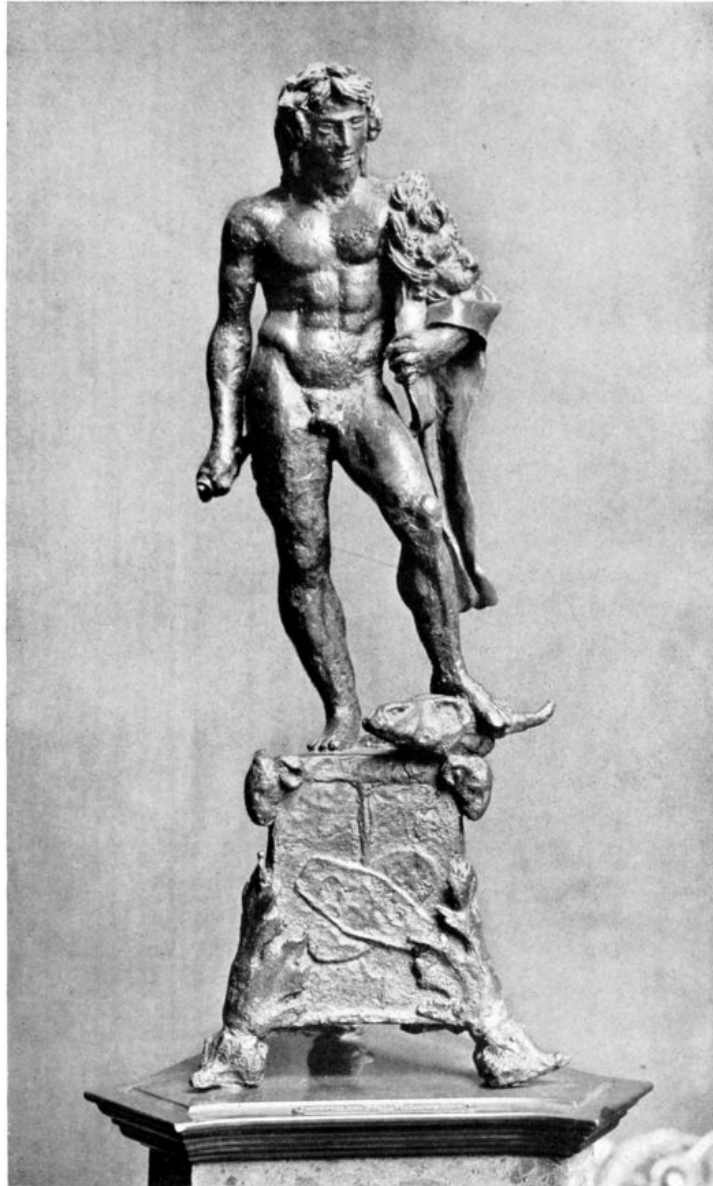
Very rarely indeed can a good picture be made out of a funeral scene. Such a scene attending the death of a great man may be fitly produced, so long as the imagination can be used in the composition; that is to say, if there are few or no records of the actual funeral^[bu]; but paintings relating to the modern burial of unnamed persons are of little value as works of art, for the imagination of the artist cannot extend beyond unpleasant prosaic incidents of common acquaintance. The purpose of the funeral scenes of Courbet^[bv] and Anne Ancher^[bw] has never been explained; and the various interiors, each with a coffin and distracted relatives of the dead, by Wiertz,^[bx] Dalsgaard,^[by] and other modern artists, are capable of bringing only misery instead of pleasure to the observer.

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But while funerals are unsuitable for the painter, interior scenes where death has occurred and friends are watching the body, offer special inducements to artists, because the perfect stillness of the living persons represented may be properly assumed, and so the illusion of life is little likely to be disturbed through the non-completion of an indicated action. On this account these works appear very impressive when well executed, and they may take high rank even when the artist is limited in his scope by the conditions of an actual scene. Very little is required however to destroy the illusion of continuity. In Kampf's picture of the lying-in-state of William I.,^[bz] where many watchers are shown who are presumed to be motionless, a boy in the middle distance in the act of walking, is a most disturbing element. An example where an illusion of continuity is perfectly maintained is Orchardson's Borgia, where Cæsar Borgia stands in contemplation over the body of his poisoned victim. The silence indicated appears practically as permanent as the painted design, for any reasonable time spent by the observer in examining the picture, is not likely to be longer than that during which Cæsar may be presumed to have remained still at the actual occurrence. Scenes of approaching death may be arranged to produce a similar illusion, as for instance where those present are praying, or a single figure is waiting for the life to pass from the sick person.

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PLATE 16



Hercules Contemplating Death, in Bronze, by Pollaiuolo
(Frick Collection) (See page 190)

Hercules Contemplating Death, in Bronze, by Pollaiuolo
(Frick Collection)

(See [page 190](#))

Little attention has been paid in art to the expression of dying persons. There are many pictures representing celebrated men and women in their dying moments, but very few of them exhibit an expression of noble resignation and fearlessness, qualities which are naturally associated with a great man as his end draws near. No doubt the artist is often limited in his invention by the actual circumstances of the death scene, as in Copley's *Death of Chatham*,^[ca] for the statesman was unconscious at the moment of representation. Other than this the best known works of the kind relate to the death of Seneca,^[cb] Queen Elizabeth,^[cc] and General Wolfe.^[cd] In the last instance only is there a fine expression. How it was that Rubens missed his opportunity with Seneca is hard to understand. The presence of a clerk taking down the utterances of a philosopher as he bleeds to death, gives the design a theatrical appearance, and removes any suggestion of unconcerned resignation which might have arisen. One of the most powerful designs in existence relating to approaching death, is a sculptured figure in bronze of Hercules contemplating death.^[ce] The demi-god is represented standing on an altar. His left foot is raised upon the skull of an ox; his head is slightly bent, and the whole attitude suggests a few moments of rest while he contemplates his coming fate. The conception is as fine as the subject is rare.

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The artist should glorify death if possible, but he can only do this when the subject has a general application. Many painters have introduced the Angel of Death into scenes where death has occurred, and have thus converted them into work of pathos and beauty. Notable examples of this are Watts's *Death, the Friend*, already referred to, and H. Levy's *Young Girl and Death*, where the Angel gently clasps the body of a girl whose face is hidden. One of the finest designs of the kind is Lard's *Glory Forgets not Obscure Heroes*. On a battlefield, where all else has gone, lies the body of a soldier over whom stoops a lovely winged figure who raises the head of the hero, and seems to throw a halo of glory over him.^[cf] In historical paintings the appearance of sleep is often given to a dead body, as in Cogniet's *Tintoretto Painting his Dead Daughter*, a pathetic picture, bringing to mind the story of Luca Signorelli painting his dead son.^[cg]

FOOTNOTES:

- [a] A notable exception is Poussin's Descent from the Cross, Hermitage.
- [b] See Plate 14⁵⁵.
- [c] "Traduction des 34me, 35me, et 36me livres de Pline."
- [d] Laocoon.
- [e] The Brera, Milan.
- [f] In a scene of The Eucharist, Antwerp.
- [g] Christ on the Cross, Berlin.
- [h] As in Hacker's Cry of Egypt.
- [i] See Gros's Timoleon of Corinth.
- [j] Leighton's Captive Andromache.
- [k] An exception where the mouth only is used is a drawing for the Madonna and Child with St. Anne, Burlington House, London.
- [l] Salome, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
- [m] Madonna and Child, Arezzo.
- [n] Madonna and Child, Brera, Milan.
- [o] Cowper Madonna, Panshanger, England.
- [p] See Casa Tempi Madonna, Munich; and Virgin with a Goldfinch, Uffizi.
- [q] Portrait of a Young Man, Budapest; and the Fornarina, Barberini Gallery, Florence.
- [r] At Versailles.
- [s] Madame Louise, at Versailles.
- [t] Portrait of a Young Woman, the Louvre.
- [u] Two examples in the group Madame Mercier and Family, Louvre.
- [v] Madame Olivier, Groult (formerly), Coll., Paris.
- [w] See Madame de la Popelinière and Mdlle. Carmago, both at Saint Quentin Museum; and Madame Pompadour, Louvre.
- [x] See Mrs. Yates, Llangattock Coll.; William Booth, Lathom Coll.; and Mrs. Tickle, A. de Rothschild (formerly) Coll., all England.
- [y] T. Chamberlayne Coll., England.
- [z] For exceptions see Hon. Lavinia Bingham, Spencer Coll., and Mrs. Abington, Fife Coll., both England.
- [aa] See Farmer's Wife, Mitchell Coll.; Mrs. Lauzun, National Gallery, London; and Mrs. Balfour, Beith Coll., Scotland.
- [ab] Lady Sheffield, Alice Rothschild Coll.; and Mrs. Leybourne, Popham Coll.
- [ac] Virgin and Child at Bergamo.
- [ad] Notably A Muse Instructing a Court Poet, and Nymph and Satyr, Pitti Palace.
- [ae] National Gallery, London.
- [af] Berlin Gallery.
- [ag] See Merry Company at Table, Met. Mus., N. Y., and similar pictures.
- [ah] Christ Blessing, a single figure picture.
- [ai] Hermitage, Petrograd.
- [aj] Boston Museum, U. S. A. See Plate 15.
- [ak] As in Dow's The Dentist, Schwerin Mus., and a similar work at the Louvre.
- [al] Hermitage, Petrograd.
- [am] Bologna Museum.
- [an] For example, Rubens's David's Last Song, Frankfort Museum.
- [ao] See examples by Ary Scheffer, Luxembourg; and H. Thoma, Burnitz Coll.
- [ap] Both at the Louvre.
- [aq] The Bargello, Florence.
- [ar] As in K. Meyer's picture.
- [as] Bridgewater Coll., England.
- [at] Pitti Palace, Florence.
- [au] The Prado, Madrid.
- [av] Vincenza Museum.
- [aw] Vita somnium breve.
- [ax] At the Louvre. Formerly attributed to Giorgione.
- [ay] Borghese Gallery, Rome.
- [az] Frankfort Museum.
- [ba] The Prado, Madrid.

- [bb] Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
- [bc] Berlin Gallery.
- [bd] Lesson in Anatomy of Professor Tulp, and the fragment of a similar work, both at The Hague.
- [be] Rijks Museum, Amsterdam.
- [bf] Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia.
- [bg] Masters of Other Days.
- [bh] At the Louvre.
- [bi] Old Man and Death, Bruges.
- [bj] Imperial Gallery, Vienna.
- [bk] Girl and Death, Basle Museum.
- [bl] Basle Museum.
- [bm] Death at a Masked Ball.
- [bn] Race for Fortune.
- [bo] Sin and Death.
- [bp] Cupid and Death.
- [bq] Revenge.
- [br] Woodcut by A. Rethel.
- [bs] Lithograph by O. Redon.
- [bt] Painting by G. F. Watts.
- [bu] As in Rubens's Funeral of Decius, Vienna.
- [bv] The Burial at Ornans.
- [bw] The Funeral.
- [bx] The Orphans.
- [by] The Child's Coffin.
- [bz] The Night of March 31, 1888, at Berlin.
- [ca] National Gallery, London.
- [cb] By Rubens, at Munich.
- [cc] By Delaroche, at the Louvre.
- [cd] By Benjamin West, Westminster Coll., London.
- [ce] By A. Pollaiuolo, Frick Coll., New York. See Plate 16⁵⁹.
- [cf] The design for this picture was probably suggested by Longepied's fine sculptured group of Immortality at the Louvre, the idea of which was no doubt drawn from Canova's L'Amour et Psyche. There are Tangara groups and fragments of larger works in existence showing that the Greeks executed many designs of a similar character.
- [cg] See also Girodet's Burial of Atala, and Le Brun's Death of Cato.

CHAPTER XII

LANDSCAPE

Limitations of the landscape painter—Illusion of opening distance—Illusion of motion in landscape—Moonlight scenes—Transient conditions.

Considered as a separate branch of the painter's art, landscape is on a comparatively low plane, because the principal signs with which it deals, and the arrangement of them to form a view, may be varied indefinitely without a sense of incongruity arising. Thus there can be no ideal in the art; that is to say, no ideal can be conceived which is general in its character. The artist can aspire to no definite goal: his imagination is limited to the arrangement of things which are inanimate and expressionless. He may produce sensorial, but not intellectual, beauty. The nobler human attributes and passions, as wisdom, courage, spiritual exaltation, patriotism, cannot be connected with landscape, and so it is unable to produce in the mind the elevation of thought and grandeur of sentiment which are the sweetest blossoms of the tree of art.⁶⁰

Another drawback in landscape is the necessity for painting it on an extraordinarily reduced scale. Because of this the highest qualities of beauty in nature—grandeur and sublimity—can only with difficulty be suggested on canvas, for actual magnitude is requisite for the production of either of these qualities in any considerable degree. A volcano in eruption has no force at all in a painting, a result which is due, not so much to the inability of the painter to represent moving smoke and fire, as to the impossibility of depicting their enormous masses. The disability of the painter in respect of the representation of magnitude is readily seen in the case of a cathedral interior. This may or may not have the quality of grandeur, but a picture cannot differentiate between one that has, and one that has not, because no feeling of grandeur can arise in looking at a painted interior, the element of actual space being absent.

Seeing that an ideal in landscape is impossible, the landscape painter cannot improve upon nature. In the case of the human figure the painter may improve upon experience by collecting excellencies from different

models and putting them into one form, thus creating what would be universally regarded as ideal physical beauty; and he may give to this form an expression of spiritual nobility which is also beyond experience because it would imply the absence of inferior qualities inseparable from man in nature. Thus to the physical, he adds intellectual beauty. Such a perfect form may be said to be an improvement upon nature, for it is not only beyond experience, but is nature purified. But the landscape painter cannot improve upon the signs which nature provides. He may vary the parts of a tree as he will, but it would never be recognized as beyond possible experience unless it were a monstrosity.⁶¹ And even if he could improve upon experience with his signs, this would help him but little, for the beauty of a landscape depends upon the relation of the signs to each other, and not upon the beauty of the separate signs which vary in every work with the character of the design. In colour also the painter cannot apply to his landscape an appropriate harmony which the sun is incapable of giving. From all this it follows that the æsthetic value of a landscape depends entirely upon its correspondence with nature.

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A good landscape must necessarily be invented, because it is impossible to reproduce the particular beauty of a natural scene.⁶² This beauty is due to a relation of parts of the view, infinite in number, to each other, but what this relation is cannot be determined by the observer. Further, whatever be the relation, the continuous changing light and atmospheric effects bring about a constant variation in the character of the beauty. It is possible for an actual view to suggest to the artist a scheme for a beautiful landscape, but in this the precise relation of the parts would have to be invented by the painter and fixed by experiment. The principal features from a natural view may be taken out, but not those which together bring about the beauty. There is no great landscape in existence which was painted for the purpose of representing a particular view. There have of course been scenes painted to order, even by notable artists, but these only serve the purpose of record, or as mementoes. The great view of The Hague, painted by Van Goyen under instructions from the syndics of the town, is the feeblest of his works, and the many pictures of the kind executed by British and German artists of the eighteenth century have now only a topographical interest. Constable painted numerous scenes to order, and there are something like forty views of Salisbury Cathedral attributed to him, but only those in which he could apply his own invention are of considerable æsthetic value. A good artist rarely introduces into a painting even a small sketch of a scene made from nature. Titian is known to have drawn numerous sketches in particular localities, but not one has been identified in his pictures. In nearly every painting of Nicholas Poussin the Roman Campagna may be recognized, and here he must have made thousands of sketches during the forty years he spent in the district, yet the most patient examination has failed to identify a single spot in his many beautiful views. So with Gaspar Poussin, who, unlike his famous brother-in-law, occasionally set up his easel in the open air; and with Claude who never left off sketching in his long life. The greatest landscapes are those which are true to nature generally, but are untrue in respect of any particular natural scene.

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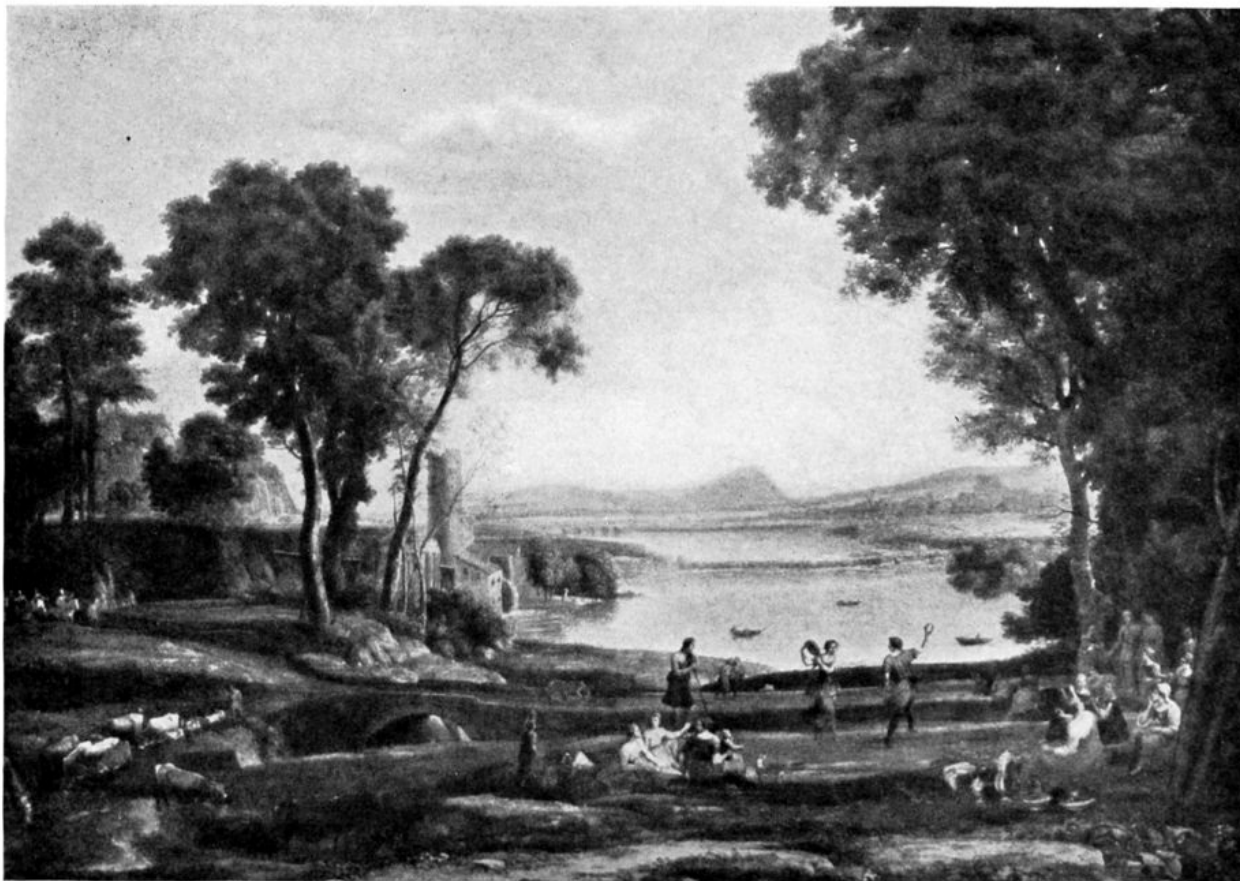
Seeing that in landscape the production of sensorial beauty only is within the power of the painter, and that the beauty is enhanced as nature is the more closely imitated, it is obvious that for the work to have a permanent interest, the scene depicted and the incidents therein should be of common experience, otherwise the full recognition of the beauty is likely to be retarded by the reasoning powers being involuntarily set to work in the consideration of the exceptional conditions. Naturally the term "common experience" has a varied application. What is of common experience in scenery among people in a temperate climate, is rare or unknown to those living under the burning sun of Africa. The artist is fully aware of this, and in designing his work he takes into account the experience of the people who are likely to see his paintings. A view of a scene in the East, say in Palestine or Siam, may be a beautiful work and be recognized as true because the conditions depicted are commonly known to exist; it would further have an informative value which would result in added pleasure; but among people habituated to a temperate climate it would tire more quickly than a scene of a kind to which they are daily accustomed. In the one case an effort, however slight, is required to accommodate the view to experience, and in the other the whole meaning of the scene is instantaneously identified with its beauty.

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In nature there is always movement and sound. Even on those rare days when the wind has ceased and the air seems still and dead, there is motion with noise of some kind. A brook trickles by, insects buzz their zigzag way, and shadows vary as the sun mounts or descends. But most commonly there is a breeze to rustle the trees and shrubs, to ripple the surface of the water, and to throw over the scene evidence of life in its ever charming variety. The painter cannot reproduce these movements and sounds. All he represents is silent and still as if nature had suddenly suspended her work—stayed the tree as it bent to the breeze, stopped the bird in the act of flight, fixed the water, and fastened the shadows to the ground. What is there then to compensate the artist for this limitation? Why, surely he can represent nature as she is at a particular moment, over the hills and valleys, or across great plains, with sunlight and atmosphere to mark the breadth and distance and so produce an illusion of movement to delight the eyes of the observer with bewitching surprise. For the eye as it involuntarily travels from the foreground of the picture to the background, proceeds from sign to sign, each decreasing in definition in conformity with the changes in nature, till vague suggestions of form announce that far distance has been reached. The effect is precisely that of the cinematograph, except that the eye moves instead of the picture. The apparent movement corresponds closely with the opening of distance in nature when one proceeds in a fast moving vehicle along a road from which a considerable stretch of country may be observed. Very rarely is the illusion so marked that the apparent movement is identified to the senses. When it is so marked the distance seems to come forward, but is instantaneously stayed before consideration can be brought to bear upon it. Clearly if one specially seek the illusion, it becomes impossible because search implies reason and an examination slow out of all proportion with the rapidity of the sensorial effect. Accident alone will bring about the illusion, for it can only arise when the eye travels at a certain rate over the picture, the minimum of which rate is indeterminable.

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Arcadian Landscape, by Claude Lorraine
(National Gallery, London)

(See page xii)

Arcadian Landscape, by Claude Lorraine
(National Gallery, London)

(See [page xii](#))

It is evident that any landscape of fair size in which considerable depth is indicated must necessarily produce an illusion of opening distance if the varying signs are sufficiently numerous and properly painted in accordance with the aerial perspective; and this illusion is undoubtedly the key to the extraordinary beauty observed in the works of the great masters of landscape since Claude unveiled the secrets of distance painting. That the apparent movement is rarely actually defined is immaterial, for it must be there and must act upon the eye, producing an involuntary sensation which we interpret as pleasure arising from admiration of the skill of the artist in giving us so good a representation of distance in his imitation.

As will presently be seen there are other kinds of illusion of motion which may be produced in landscape, but this illusion of opening distance is the most important, and it should be produced wherever distance is represented. In nature the effect of the unfolding of distance is caused by a sequence of signs apparently diminishing in size and clearness as the eye travels back, and a sequence of this kind should be produced by the artist in his picture. It is not sufficient that patches of colour of the tone and shape of sections of vegetation, trees, varied soils, and so on, be given, for while these may indicate distance as any perspective must do, yet an illusion cannot be produced by such signs because they are not sufficiently numerous for the eye to experience a cinematographic effect when passing over them. It is not distance that gives the beauty, but an illusion of opening distance, without which, and presuming the absence of any other illusion, only simple harmonies of tone and inanimate forms are possible. Moreover the patches of colour do not properly represent nature either as she appears to the eye, or as she is understood from experience. If one were to take a momentary glance at a view specially to receive the general colour impression, he might conceivably retain on his mind a collection of colour masses such as is often put forward as a landscape, but natural scenes are not observed in this way, and the artist has no right to imply that a view should be painted as it is observed at an instantaneous glance. One cannot be supposed to keep his eyes closed, except for a moment, when in front of nature, and he cannot be in front of nature for more than a moment without involuntarily recognizing thousands of signs. There must necessarily be a certain clearness of the atmosphere for distance to be represented, and in the minimum clearness, trees, bushes, rivulets, and buildings of every kind, are well defined at least to the middle distance. These can and should be painted, and there can be no object whatever in omitting them, except the ignominious end of saving trouble.

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And it is necessary that the signs, whether shadow or substance, should be completely painted as they appear to the eye in nature when observed with average care by one inspecting a view for the purpose of drinking in all its beauties, for this is how a painted landscape is usually examined. There is no place in the painter's art for a suggestive sign in the sense that it may suggest a required complete sign. A sign must be painted as completely as possible in conformity with its appearance as seen from the presumed point from which the artist sketched his view, for the reason that its value as a sign depends upon the readiness with which it is understood.⁶³ This is incontrovertible, otherwise the art of painting would be an art of hieroglyphics. In poetry suggestion is of great importance, and it may be so glowing as to present to the imagination a higher form of beauty than can be painted; but the signs of the painter cannot suggest beauty in this way, because the exercise of the imagination in respect of them is limited by their form. A sign painted

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less distinctly than as it is seen in nature is obviously removed from its proper relative position, or else is untrue, and in either case it must have a weakening effect upon the picture.

The successful representation of aerial perspective depends upon the careful and close gradation of tones in conformity with the varying atmospheric density. This is difficult work because of the disabilities arising from the reduction of the scene into miniature form, which necessitates the omission of many tones and effects found in nature, just as a portrait in miniature involves the exclusion of various elements of expression in the human countenance. But fortunately in landscape the variableness of nature greatly assists the artist. Only rarely is the atmosphere of equal density over a considerable depth of ground, and this fact enables the painter to simplify his work in production of the illusion without appearing to depart from nature. Thus he may deepen or contract his foreground within wide limits. The changes in the appearance of the atmosphere in nature have to be greatly concentrated in a painting, and as this concentration becomes more difficult as distance is reached, it follows that the artist has a better chance of success by making the foreground of his picture begin some way in front of him, rather than near the spot where he is presumed to stand when he executes his work. He may of course maintain some very near ground while materially shortening his middle distance, but this method must obviously lower the beauty of the painting as a distance landscape, and make the execution vastly more difficult. Claude adopted this plan sometimes, but it is seen in very few of his important works. In his best time Turner was careful to set back his foreground, and to refrain from restricting his middle ground.

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If a scene be taken from the middle distance only, as in many Barbizon works, the labour is much simplified because neither the close delineation of foliage, nor any considerable gradation of atmosphere is required, but then the beauty resulting from either of these two exercises is missing. It is equally impossible for such a scene to indicate growth and life, or the charm of a changing view. Some modern artists have a habit of blotting out the middle and far distance by the introduction of a thick atmosphere but this is an abuse of the art, because however true the aspect may be in the sense that a natural view is sometimes obscured by the atmosphere, the beauty of the scene as a whole is hidden, and the picture consists largely of an imitation of the mist, where an illusion of movement is impossible. The painter should imitate the more beautiful, and not the less beautiful aspects of nature. Jupiter has been sometimes painted as an incident in a picture, nearly wholly concealed by a cloud, but to exhibit a separate work of the god so concealed, would only be regarded as an excuse for avoiding exertion, however well the cloud may be painted; yet this would not be more reprehensible than to hide the greater part of a view by a dense atmosphere.

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With a clear atmosphere an illusion of opening distance may be secured with the far distance and the greater part of the middle distance unobservable, but in such a case a successful design is difficult to accomplish owing to the limited number of signs available. Many signs, as trees and houses, either darken or hide the view, while sunlight effects on unobstructed ground, sufficiently definite to be used as signs, could not be very numerous without appearing abnormal. The only really first-class method of producing a satisfactory near-ground illusion was invented by Hobbema in the later years of his life. This is to use skilfully placed trees and other signs through which paths wind, or appear to wind, and to throw in a strong sunlight from the back.^[a] The light enables far more signs to be used in depth than would otherwise be possible, and so the eye has a comparatively long track to follow. That the remarkable beauty of the pictures of Hobbema composed in this way is almost entirely due to the illusion thus created, is readily seen when they are compared with some of his other works, very similar in all respects except that the light is thrown in from the front or the side. Before placing his light at the back, the artist tried the side plan in many pictures, and while this was a decided improvement upon his earlier efforts to secure depth of near-ground signs, it was naturally inferior to the latest scheme. Jacob Ruysdael adopted the plan of Hobbema in two or three works with great effect.^[b]

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When the middle distance is hidden by a rising foreground, an illusion may be created by the far distance alone if this be of considerable depth. Since the fifteenth century it has been a frequent practice to conceal the middle distance, though mostly in pictures of figure subjects.⁶⁴ The Dutch artists of the seventeenth century who painted open-air scenes of human and animal life, as Paul Potter, Wouwerman, and Albert Cuyp, avoided the middle distance whenever possible, but often managed to secure a fair illusion. In pure landscape the system is less often practised, and never by great artists.

The only means available to the painter of land views for creating an illusion of motion, apart from that of opening distance, is by the representation of flowing water so that a series of successive events in the flow, each connected with, but varying in character from, the preceding one, can be exhibited. Thus, a volume of water from a fall proceeds rapidly over a flat surface to a ledge, and thence perhaps to another ledge of a different depth, from which it passes over or round irregular rocks and boulders, and thence over smaller stones or into a stream, creating in its passage every kind of eddy and current.^[c] Here is a series of progressive natural actions in which the progression is regular and continuous, while the separate actions cover such time and space that they may be readily separated by the eye. If, therefore, the whole series be properly represented, an illusion of motion will result.⁶⁵ Obviously the canvas must be of considerable size, and the breaks in the flow of water as varied in character and as numerous as possible. Everdingen and Jacob Ruysdael seem to have been the first artists to recognize the significance of this progression, but Ruysdael far surpassed his master in the exhibition of it. He examined the problem in all its variations, solved it in a hundred ways, and at his death left little for succeeding painters to learn regarding it. Very rarely, one meets with a landscape where the double illusion of motion of water and opening distance is provided, and needless to say the effect is superb.^[d]

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Sea views occupy a position by themselves inasmuch as there is a fixed horizontal distance for the artist. He cannot shorten this depth without making his work look abnormal, and an effort to increase it by presuming that the picture is painted from a considerable height above the sea level, is seldom successful because the observer of the work finds a difficulty in fitting in the novelty with his experience. Except when depicting stormy weather, or showing a thick atmosphere, the painter of a sea view has no trouble in obtaining absolute accuracy in his linear perspective, but this is not sufficient, for if a variety of trees, herbage, brooks, and so on, requires an illusion of movement, then certainly does a sea view which has monotony for its keynote. The motion of the waves in fine weather cannot be suggested on canvas because it is continuous and equal. One wave displaces another and so far as the eye can reach there is only a succession of similar waves. Thus the motion appears unbroken, and from the canvas point of view the waves must be motionless as the sand hillocks of a desert. Of course in the actual view, the expanse, the "immeasurable stretch of ocean," is impressive and to some extent weird, but nothing of this feeling is induced by a painted miniature. With a bright sky and clear atmosphere the painter of a sea view cannot well obtain an illusion of opening distance

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by means of a multiplication of signs as on land, for the introduction of many vessels would give the work a formal appearance, but the problem can be satisfactorily solved by putting the sun in the sky towards the setting, and using cloud shadows as signs. Aivasovsky, one of the greatest marine painters of modern times, was very successful with this class of work. His long shadows thrown at right angles to the line of sight, carry back the distance till the horizon seems to be further off than experience warrants, the illusion being perfect. An illusion of opening distance may, however, be easily obtained in a sea view when there is a haze covering, but not hiding, the horizon, by introducing as signs, two or three vessels, the first in the middle distance.

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Another method of giving a suggestion of motion, which may be used by the sea painter, is in truthfully representing the appearance of the water round a vessel passing through it. What is probably the finest example of this work in existence is Jacob Ruysdael's *The Rising Storm*.^[e] The sea is shown close to a port, and half a dozen smacks and small boats are being tossed about by choppy, breaking waves. In the centre of the picture is a large smack over the weather bow of which a huge foaming wave has broken, and part is spending its force on the lee bow, from which the water gradually becomes quieter till at the stern of the boat little more than a black concavity is seen. The progression of wave movement is completely represented, and the effect is very impressive.

The coast painter can produce an excellent illusion of motion from waves breaking on a beach, for in nature this action is made up of a series of different consecutive acts each of which is easily distinguishable to the eye. The wave rises, bends over its top which becomes crested, and splashes forward on the beach, to be converted into foam which races onwards, breaking up as it goes till it reaches the watermark, then rapidly falling back to be met by another wave. Here is a series of consecutive incidents which can all be painted so as to deceive for a moment with the idea of motion. The attempt to represent the action of waves breaking against steep rocks is invariably a failure, because of the great reduction of the apparent number of incidents forming the consecutive series. In nature the eye is not quick enough to follow the separate events, and so they cannot be distinguished in a painting. Thomson's fine picture of *Fast Castle* is distinctly marred by a wide irregular column of water shown splashing up against a rock. There is no possibility here of representing a series of actions, and so an instant suffices to fix the water on the rock. In another work by the same artist there are waves breaking against precipitous rocks, but in this case the water first passes over an expanse of low lying rocks, and a sequence of actions is shown right up to the cliff, an excellent illusion of movement being brought about.^[f]

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Apart from those exhibiting an illusion of motion of some kind, the only landscapes which have a permanent value, are near-ground scenes in which conditions of atmosphere of common experience, as rain or storm are faithfully rendered. In these works the signs must be numerous and varied in character, for it is only in the multiplication of small changes of form and tone that the natural effects of a particular weather condition can be imitated. Jacob Ruysdael and Constable were the greatest masters of this form of landscape, Crome and Boecklin closely approaching them, but it is uncommon for a serious worker in landscape to attempt a picture where distance is not recorded. The best paintings of Constable present an illusion of opening distance, and when Jacob Ruysdael painted near-ground only, it was nearly always a hilly slope with water breaking over low rocks.

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Moonlight and twilight scenes are not good subjects for the painter of landscape, because, shown as they must be in daylight, or with artificial light, they become distinctly uninteresting after the first impression of tonal harmony has passed away, owing to the unconscious revolt of the mind against something with an unreal appearance.⁶⁶ This is the chief reason why no scene has lived which depended for its beauty entirely upon moonlight effects. It is about two hundred and fifty years since Van der Neer died, and he still remains practically the only moonlight painter known to us whose works seem of permanent interest. But he did not rely altogether upon moonlight effects for his beauty, for the representation of distance is the principal feature in all his works. Further he commonly makes us acquainted with the human life and habitations of his time, and in this way enhances our appreciation of his pictures. Before Van der Neer, moonlight scenes were very rarely executed, and only two or three of these have remained which are worthy of serious consideration. The best of them is a view by Rubens, where the light is comparatively strong, and practically the whole of the beauty rests in the opening distance, which can hardly be surpassed in a work of this kind.^[g]

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It is not necessary to deal with varieties of pure landscape other than those mentioned. They are painted in their myriads, and form pleasant tonal harmonies, or have local interest, but they do not live. As the foliage in springtime they are fresh and welcome to the eye when they first appear, but all too soon they fade and disappear from memory like the leaves of the autumn.

In landscape as in all other branches of painting, whatever is ephemeral in nature, or of uncommon experience, should be avoided. Rare sun effects and exceptional phases of atmosphere should not find their way into pictures, while strokes of lightning and rainbows should only be present when they are necessitated by the design, and then must be subordinated as far as possible. Of all these things the most strongly to be deprecated are strange sunlight effects, for they have the double drawback for the painter, of rarity and evanescence in nature. A stroke of lightning is not out of place where the conditions may be presumed to be more or less permanent, as in the celebrated picture of Apelles, where Alexander was represented in the character of Jupiter casting a thunderbolt, and forks of lightning proceed from his hand; or where the occurrence is essential in the composition, as in Gilbert's *Slaying of Job's Sheep*.^[h] So in Danby's *The Sixth Seal Opened*, the lightning is quite appropriate, for all nature is disturbed. In Martin's *Plague of Hail*, and *The Destruction of Pharaoh*, the first a night scene, and the second a view darkened by dense black clouds, lightning is well used for lighting purposes; and in Cot's *The Storm*,^[i] where the background is dark and no sky is visible, lightning is the only means possessed by the artist of explaining that the fear expressed by the lovers in the foreground, arises from the approaching storm. Great masters like Giorgione,^[j] Rubens,^[k] Poussin,^[l] used a stroke of lightning on rare occasions, but took every care that it should not be conspicuous, or interfere in any way with the first view of the picture. The lightning is invariably placed in the far background, and no light is apparently reflected from it.

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Landscape, by Hobbema
(Metropolitan Museum, N. Y.)

(See page 202)

Landscape, by Hobbema
(Metropolitan Museum, N. Y.)

(See [page 202](#))

A rainbow in nature has a life of appreciable duration, and so may be appropriately used in landscape, but obviously it should be regarded as a minor accessory except where it forms a necessary feature in the design.

[m] The great drawback in a prominent rainbow is that it forces itself upon the attention of the observer to the detriment of the picture as a whole, and if it be very conspicuous and crosses the middle of the painted view, as in Turner's Arundel Castle, the picture appears divided in two parts, and the possibility of an illusion of opening distance is destroyed. [n] Almost as bad is the effect when a rainbow cuts off a corner of a picture, for this suggests at first sight an accidental interference with the work. [o] Of all artists Rubens seemed to know best how to use a rainbow. He adopts three methods. The first and best is to put the bow entirely in the sky [p]; the second to throw it right into the background where part of it is dissolved in the view [q]; and the third to indicate the bow in one part of the picture, and overshadow it with a strong sunlight thrown in from another part. [r] Any of these forms seems to answer well, but they practically exhaust the possibilities in general design. A section of a rainbow may be shown with one end of it on the ground, because this is observable in nature [s]; but to cut off the top of the arch as if there were no room for it on the canvas is obviously bad, for the two segments left appear quite unnatural. [t]

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The small rainbows sometimes seen at waterfalls are occasionally introduced into paintings, but rarely with success because they tend to interfere with the general view of the scene. Such views are necessarily near ground, and so a bow must seriously injure the picture unless it be placed at the side, as in Innes's fine work of Niagara Falls (the example of 1884).

The use of a rainbow as a track in classical pictures is sometimes effective, though the landscape is largely sacrificed owing to the compulsory great width and bright appearance of the bow, which must indeed practically absorb the attention of the observer. The best known picture of this kind is Schwind's Rainbow, which shows the beautiful form of Iris wrapped in the sheen of the bow, and descending with great speed, the idea being apparently taken from Virgil. [u] To use the top of the rainbow for a walking track is bad, as the mind instinctively repels the invention as opposed to reason. [v]

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But if fleeting natural phenomena become disturbing to the observer of a picture, how much more objectionable are the quickly disappearing effects of artificial devices, as the lights from explosions. In a battle scene covering a wide area of ground, a small cloud of smoke here and there is not out of place, because under natural conditions such a cloud lasts for an appreciable time; but no good artist will indicate in his work a flash from a gun, for this would immediately become stagy and unreal to the observer. Nor can fireworks of the ordinary kind be properly represented in a picture. The beauty of these fireworks lies in the appearance out of nothing, as it were, of brilliant showers of coloured lights, and their rapid disappearance, to be replaced by others of different form and character, the movement and changes constituting important elements in their appreciation. But the painter can only indicate them by fixed points of light which necessarily appear abnormal. Stationary points of light can have no resemblance whatever to fireworks, and if the title of the picture forces the imagination to see in them expiring sparks from a rocket, the impression can

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only last a moment, and will be succeeded by a revolt in the mind against so glaring an impossibility as a number of permanent sparks. The only painted firework display that does not appear abnormal is a fountain of fire and sparks which may be presumed to last for some time, and therefore would not quickly tire the mind.^[w]

FOOTNOTES:

- [a] See Plate 18.
- [b] For example, The Marsh, Hermitage.
- [c] See Plate 19.
- [d] For examples see S. Bough's Borrowdale, and Thoma's View of Laufenburg.
- [e] Berlin Gallery. See Plate 20.
- [f] Dunluce Castle, which with Fast Castle, is in the Kingsborough Collection, Scotland.
- [g] Landscape by Moonlight, Mond Collection, London.
- [h] The fire of God is fallen from Heaven, and hath burned up the sheep and the servants. Job 1, 16.
- [i] Metropolitan Museum, N. Y.
- [j] Adrastus and Hypsipyle, Venice.
- [k] Landscape with Baucis and Philemon, Munich.
- [l] Jonah cast into the sea.
- [m] As in Martin's I have Set My Bow in the Clouds.
- [n] In the Rivers of England series.
- [o] The Rainbow of Millet, and a similar work of Thoma.
- [p] Harvest Landscape, Munich Gallery.
- [q] Harvest Landscape, Wallace Collection, London.
- [r] Landscape with a Rainbow, Hermitage, Petrograd.
- [s] Rubens's Shipwreck of Æneas, Berlin Gallery.
- [t] A. P. Van de Venne's Soul Fishery, Amsterdam.
- [u] Æneid V., where Juno sends Iris to the Trojan fleet.
- [v] Thoma's Progress of the gods to Walhalla.
- [w] See examples by La Touche, notably La Fête de Nuit, Salon, 1914.

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CHAPTER XIII

STILL-LIFE

Its comparative difficulty—Its varieties—Its limitations.

Right through the degrees of the art of the painter till we reach still-life, the difficulty in producing the art is in proportion to the general beauty therein, but in the case of still-life the object is much less readily gained than in simple landscape which is on a higher level in painting. The causes of this apparent anomaly appear to be as follows:—Firstly in miniature painting one does not expect such close resemblance to nature as in still-life which usually represents things in their natural size: secondly, in still-life the relative position of the parts can never be such as to appear novel, whereas in landscape their position is always more or less unexpected: thirdly, in still-life the colours are practically fixed, for the painter cannot depart from the limited variety of tints commonly connected with the objects indicated, while in landscape the colouring may vary almost indefinitely from sun effects without appearing to depart from nature.

The beauty in still-life paintings may arise from several causes, namely, the pleasure experienced from the excellence of the imitation; the harmony of tones; the beauty of the things imitated; the association of ideas; and the pleasure derived from the acquisition of knowledge. Aristotle seemed to think this last one of the principal reasons for our appreciation of the painter's work, though he agreed that the better the imitation, the greater the pleasure to the observer. The argument appears to apply particularly to the lower forms of life because in nature they are not often closely examined. A cauliflower for instance may be seen a thousand times by one who would not carefully note its structure, but if he see an imitation of it painted by a good artist, his astonishment at the excellence of the imitation might cause him to observe the representation closely, and learn much about the vegetable which he did not know before. In this way the information gained would add to his pleasure.

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As in landscape, from the absence of abstract qualities from the things represented, and since the position of the signs may be indefinitely varied without a sense of incongruity resulting, there can be no ideal in still-life, and so the painter cannot pass beyond experience without achieving the abnormal.

The painter of still-life has the choice of four kinds of imitation, namely, the representation of products of nature which are in themselves beautiful, as roses and fine plumaged birds; the imitation of products of human industry which are in themselves beautiful, as sculptured plate or fine porcelain; the representation of natural and manual products which in themselves are neither beautiful nor displeasing, but interest from association of ideas, as certain fruits, books, and musical instruments; and the imitation of things which in themselves are not pleasing to the sight, as dead game, kitchen utensils, and so on. Obviously the artist may

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assort any two or more of these varieties in the same picture. He may also associate them with life, but here he is met with a grave difficulty which goes to the very root of art. If two forms, not being merely accessories, are associated together in a design, the lower form must necessarily be subordinated, otherwise the mind of the observer will be disturbed by the apparent double objective. A live dog or other animal in a still-life composition will immediately attract the eye of the observer, drawing off his attention from the inanimate objects represented, which will consequently thereafter lose much of their interest. The presence of a man is still worse. Not only is it natural and inevitable that a human being should take precedence of whatever is inanimate in a work of art, but in the case of still-life, where he is painted of natural size, he must necessarily overshadow everything else in the picture. Further, his own representation is much injured because the surroundings exercise a disconcerting influence. Even with the human figures of such a work executed by a painter of the first rank, they are quite uninteresting.^[a]

Beautiful products of nature such as brilliant flowers and butterflies, cannot be imitated so well that the representations appear as beautiful as the things themselves, and so are unsuited as entire subjects for paintings, for we are usually well acquainted with these things, and consciously or unconsciously recognize the inferiority of the imitation. The greatest flower painters have therefore wisely refrained from introducing into their works more than a few fine roses or similar blooms. The presence of many less beautiful flowers in which the imitation is, or appears to be, more pleasing than the natural forms, neutralizes or overcomes the effect of the inferior imitation of the more beautiful. In fact the extent to which natural products which are necessarily more beautiful than the imitations, may be used in painting, except as incidentals, is very limited. They cannot appropriately be used at all on walls and curtains where they continually cross the vision, for they would there quickly tire owing to the involuntary dissatisfaction with the representation. The Japanese, whose whole art of painting was for centuries concentrated upon light internal decoration, rightly discard from this form of art all natural products which are necessarily superior to the imitations, and confine their attention to those signs which, while being actually more beautiful, when closely seen, than the imitations, do not appear to be so in nature where they are usually observed at some distance from the eye. Thus, waterfowl of various kinds, small birds of the hedges, storks, herons, branches of fruit blossoms, light trees and vegetation, are infinitely preferable to the more beautiful products for purely decorative purposes. A common pigeon with an added bright feather, is better on a wall or screen than the most brilliant pheasant, for in the one case the representation appears above ordinary experience, and in the other case, below it.

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The decorative artist then is at liberty to enhance the beauty of his signs, but not to take for them things which are commonly observed in nature, and whose beauty he cannot equal. But there should be no wide divergence between the natural beauty and the art, and nothing which in itself is unpleasing is suitable for decoration. It may be introduced in a hanging picture, because here a sense of beauty may be derived from the excellence of the imitation, as in the case of a dead hare or a basket of vegetables; but in pure decoration the effect is general and not particular, and so the imitation yields no beauty apart from that of the thing imitated.

FOOTNOTES:

[a] See still-life pictures at the Hague and Vienna Museums by Van Dyck and Snyders.

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CHAPTER XIV

SECONDARY ART

Paintings of record—Scenes from the novel and written drama—From the acted drama—Humorous subjects—Allegorical works.

When the invention of the painter is circumscribed by the requirements of another art, whether a fine art or not, then his art ceases to be a pure art and becomes an art of record, subordinate to the art by which his work is circumscribed. This may be termed the Secondary Art of painting. The art may be of importance outside the purposes of the fine arts, and in certain cases may be productive of good pictures, but only by way of accident: hence a work of secondary art never engages the attention of a great artist unless he be specially called upon to execute it. Hard and fast lines dividing the pure from the secondary art cannot be laid down, as one often verges on the other, but there is a general distinction between them which is easily comprehensible in the separate branches of painting.

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PLATE 19



Landscape, by Jacob Ruysdael
(National Gallery, London)

(See page 204)

Landscape, by Jacob Ruysdael
(National Gallery, London)

(See [page 204](#))

Secondary art is not produced from incidents or characters taken from sacred or mythological history, because here the general invention of the painter is never circumscribed, for he is able to produce form and expression above experience. In profane history the art is secondary when the painter confines his invention to recorded details. Thus in a picture of the Coronation of Charlemagne, the composition is entirely invented by the artist, and so the work becomes one of pure art; but the representation of the Coronation of Queen Victoria, where the artist reproduces the scene as it actually occurred, is secondary art, for he is precluded from the exercise of his imagination in the design, the end of art being subordinated to that of record or history. Such a picture is necessarily stiff and formal. Where the scene represents a number of actions, as in a battle design, the artist is unable to record the actual occurrence, though he may represent particular actions; consequently he has large scope for his imagination, and may limit his representation to those actions which together make a fine example of pure art. But a battle scene where a particular event, as a meeting of generals, has to be painted, immediately becomes secondary art, for then the surrounding battle events would be accessory in their nature. It is possible for simple historical works painted to order centuries ago to appear now as of high art value, because we commonly connect a strict formality with old pictures of the kind, whether executed from records or invention. Thus Holbein's Henry VIII. presenting a Charter to the Barber-Surgeons no doubt closely depicts the actual event, yet the stiffness of the design does not seem out of place.

[a] Nevertheless it is a refreshing change from this picture to Richard III. offered the Crown by London Merchants, which is a magnificent modern work of pure invention. [b]

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A scene from a story of actual life is necessarily secondary art, because here the painter imitates what is already an imitation, and cannot ascend above experience. He is confined to the invention of the novelist, and is therefore subordinate to him.

The written drama is available for the painter as a source for designs only in cases of high tragedy, or mixed plays containing strong dramatic events of tragic import. Seeing that the drama is itself an imitative art, only such actions or characters can be used by the painter which are above life experience, and it is only in

tragedy that the dramatist can exalt human attributes, and ennoble the passions above this experience. Tragedy deals directly with the two great contrasting human mysteries—life and death. From one to the other is the most awful and sublime action within human knowledge, and consequently the motives and sentiments relating to it may be carried to the loftiest reach of the understanding. An exaggeration of ordinary life, where the combination of perfected parts in form and expression is not possible, means only the abnormal; while comedy, which imitates conditions inferior to ordinary life, cannot be exaggerated except into distortion. High tragedy therefore is the only section of the written drama that concerns the painter. If he draw from any other work of the dramatist he only produces secondary art, as when he draws from the novelist. The picture may be interesting, but both interest and beauty will be fleeting.

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While the painter may use the written drama in certain cases, he can by no means be concerned with the acted drama. It is useless to attempt to produce a good picture by imitating an imitation accomplished by a combined art, as the opera or drama. A painted scene from a play as it is acted, is merely the execution of another man's design which in itself is entirely circumscribed by conditions of action and speech wholly foreign to the art of the painter. A picture of a particular moment of action in a written play, as it is thrown upon the brain in the course of reading, is interesting, firstly because our imagination has wide limits of invention, and we naturally and instinctively adopt a harmonious rendering of the scene so far as the writing will allow; and secondly for the reason that we pass rapidly from impression to impression, and so the whole significance of each picture, separately and relatively, is conveyed to us. But a painting of an acted scene is meaningless, for it can represent only one in a series of a thousand moments of action which are all connected, and of which the comprehension of any one is dependent upon our knowledge of the whole. The painter has no scope. He simply copies a number of figures in a fixed setting, and the result is necessarily inferior art to a copy of the poorest original picture, since in this case the artist at least copies the direct product of the imagination, while in the other he has only before him a series of dummies who are imitating the product. The sense of unreality arising from such a picture must instantly overpower any harmony of colour or form that may be present.

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Where the portrait of an actor is painted in a stage rôle, the same principle is involved, though the result is not so disastrous. We still have the unreal, but it is painted and put forward as a living person. The artist moreover has a little imaginative scope. He can choose a moment of action best suited to his art, and may even vary the character of the action, which is not possible where an acted scene is depicted. But notwithstanding all the relative advantages, a Raphael could not make a fine picture out of a man in character. He may largely overcome the disabilities arising from the limitation to his invention; he may introduce great effects of light and shade; may ennoble expression and give grandeur to form; but he will never hide the sham—never conceal the fact that he is representing an imitation of life. The actor on the stage is one of a number of signs used by the dramatist. His identity apart from the sign is lost, or presumed to be lost for the time being, and so he is not a sham; but outside of the stage his use or meaning as a sign does not exist. Hence the representation of this sign as a subject of a painting is only a degree less incongruous than would be the introduction of a painted figure as one of the characters of a stage scene.

It is an indication of the sure public instinct in matters of art principles, that general opinion has always tacitly condemned paintings of stage scenes and characters. They have not infrequently been produced, and sometimes artists of high rank, as Reynolds and Lawrence, have painted portraits of actors in stage rôles, but never has one met with public appreciation as a work of art. Probably in most cases these works were executed as mementoes rather than as works of art, for it is scarcely possible to conceive a painter of the stamp of Reynolds, who was so well acquainted with first principles, putting forward even a portrait of Garrick in a stage rôle, as a serious work, notwithstanding that he might well know that it was a masterpiece in respect of execution.

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Humour is not a subject for the painter to deal with, for a humorous picture cannot be comprehended without the assistance of another art. Further, comedy is founded upon a sense of the ridiculous, which means distortion of form or idea. Distortion of form would tend to destroy the art if reproduced, and distortion of idea implies events in time which are beyond the scope of the painter. If any humour were exhibited in the representation of a single moment of action in a story, it would quickly disappear, for a permanent joke is beyond the range of human understanding. In poetry and fiction, humour may be appropriately introduced, because here it is of a fugitive character, and may serve as a possible relief of the mind, as a discordant note in music; but in a painting, the moment of humour is fixed, and a fixed laugh suggests mental disorder.

Nor is there place in the art of the painter for works intending to convey satire or irony, for such pictures also mean distortion. Moreover they are merely substitutes for, or adjuncts to, the art of writing. The object of caricature is to present an idea in a more direct and rapid way than it can be expressed in writing, and not specially to exhibit beauty, which is the purpose of the painter. Hogarth's many caricatures are composed of superlative signs of writing, and not of any fine art. Cartoons (as the word is commonly understood) are of the nature of allegory, and may afford scope for the painter, but as they necessarily refer to more or less fleeting conditions of a political or social character, they cannot retain permanent interest.

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Allegorical paintings are secondary art when they endeavour to cover more than a moment of time in a single design, or when the allegory is merely a metaphor applying to action. The first variety is rarely seen in modern works, but it was not very uncommon from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, though it was never produced by first-class artists, and seldom indeed by those of the second rank. Quite a number of works of this period, formerly supposed to have an allegorical signification, are now properly identified as rarely represented mythological legends, or historical incidents which have only lately been unearthed,^[c] and we may rest assured from internal evidence that many others of the same kind will yet be newly interpreted. A good design cannot be produced from an event in time because the figures in a presumed action must be shown in repose,^[d] or else the action appears incongruous and opposed to experience, as when a goddess is overpowered by a personage with the appearance of a human being.^[e] In both cases the figures must seem to be falsities. Designs of the first kind can only be properly represented in a sequence of pictures, each indicating a particular action, as in the Marie de' Medici series of Rubens; and those of the second by commonly accepted figures of sacred or mythological history or legend, as where St. Michael and the Dragon typify Good overcoming Evil.

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It is scarcely necessary to do more than barely refer to the use of metaphor by the painter when the representation of action is involved, as for instance if he should produce a picture of a heaving ship in a storm, to meet the metaphor "As a ship is tossed on a rough sea, so has been the course of my life," though this kind of picture has been occasionally executed, the artist forgetting that it is not the object depicted that is compared, but the action—in the example quoted, the tossing of the ship—which cannot be represented on

canvas. Another form of metaphor sometimes used by the painter is that where a comparison of ideas is represented by physical proportions, as in Wiertz's Things of the Present as seen by the Future, in which the things of the present are indicated by liliputian figures on the hand of a woman of life size who represents the future. Needless to say that such designs, of which there are about a dozen in existence, can only suggest distortion, for the smaller figures must appear too small, and the larger ones too great; or if our experience with miniature imitations of the human figure warrants us in regarding the smaller figures as reasonable, then the larger ones must appear as giants of the Brobdingnagian order.

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The only form of metaphor which may be used by the painter is that wherein a beautiful symbol typifies a high abstract quality. Metaphor belongs properly to the arts of the poet and novelist who can indicate the symbol and things symbolized in immediate succession, so that the whole meaning is apparent. The painter can only represent the symbol, and unless this is beautiful and its purport readily comprehended, his sign is merely a hieroglyph—a sign of writing. Secondary art includes symbolic painting when the symbol may represent either the symbol itself or the thing symbolized, for such a condition involves a confusion of ideas which tends to destroy the æsthetic effect of the work. The most notable painting of this kind is Holman Hunt's The Scapegoat, where the design shows only a goat in desert country. The scapegoat has ceased to be an actuality for centuries, and the only meaning of the term as it is now used applies to a man: hence, with the title the goat appears to be a symbol of both a man and an animal, while without the title it is merely the image of a goat without symbolism. But the conception of an animal of any kind as a symbol is foreign to the art of the painter whose symbol should always be beautiful, whatever the nature of the representation.

FOOTNOTES:

- [a] Barbers' Hall, London.
- [b] Royal Exchange, London.
- [c] Examples are Lorenzo Costa's Cupid Crowning Isabella d'Este, Giorgione's Adrastus and Hypsipyle, and Piero di Cosimo's Marsyas picture.
- [d] Religion Succoured by Spain, the Prado, Madrid.
- [e] Lotto's Triumph of Chastity, Rospigliosi Gallery, Rome.

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CHAPTER XV

COLOUR

In itself colour has no virtues which are not governed by immutable laws. These are apart from the exercise of human faculties, the recognition of colour harmony being involuntary and entirely dependent upon the condition of the optic nerves. Thus there can be no meaning in colour apart from its application to form, and the extent to which it may be properly used in the representation of form is necessarily bound by our experience of nature. Other things being equal, the most perfect painting is that wherein there is a just balance between the colour and the form, that is to say, where the colour is not so vivid as to act upon the sense nerves before the general beauty of the work is appreciated, or so feeble or discordant that its want of natural truth is immediately presented to the mind, thus disturbing the impression of the design.

As with metrical form in poetry, the importance of colour in painting varies inversely with the character of the art. In the highest art, where ideals are dealt with, colour is of the least importance. A composition with ideal figures may be produced by drawing only, that is to say, by the use of a single tone in outline and shading. The addition of colour heightens the beauty of a composition of this kind, not so much because of the new sensorial harmony acquired, as for the reason that a painting in colours, corresponding better than a colourless drawing with our experience of nature, assists in defining the work and so reduces the fractional time necessary for the recognition of the general beauty of the design, which is a matter of importance. The comparatively small value of colour in the highest art is demonstrated by experience. If we were to choose from paintings known to us, those which general opinion regards as the very greatest works, we should unquestionably name the frescoes of Raphael and Michelangelo at the Vatican, and those of Correggio at Parma. These, with a few easel pictures of Raphael, and perhaps a dozen other pictures by various masters, are the only works of the painter's art to which the term "sublime" may be properly applied. As with the great epic poems, they are concerned entirely with ideals—with personages far above the level of life, rising to the spiritual domain—or with human beings as they would be if the highest conceptions of our imagination were possible of realization. When we recall these splendid legacies of genius to our minds, and ponder over the apparently limitless range of human vision which they evidence, it is the designs that absorb us, and not the colour—the forms and expression, and not the tints by which their definition is assisted. We do not usually analyse the impression we receive from these frescoes and pictures, but were we to do so, it would be borne in upon our minds that while a Raphael, a Michelangelo, or a Correggio, would be required to conceive and execute such stupendous designs, many thousands of unknown patient workers could be found to colour them efficiently. On the other hand if we remove the colour from the greatest landscape known to us, we find that most of the beauty of the work has disappeared, and that we have only a kind of skeleton left, for the beauty of such a picture rests very largely upon the aerial perspective, which is unobtainable without colour.

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That the appreciation of colour is relative to the character of the design may be observed from common experience. We may see the Sistine Madonna half a dozen times and then be unable to recall the colours when bringing the picture to mind, so small an effect have they had upon us as compared with that of the majesty and general beauty of the central figure. So with many of Raphael's other pictures. It is a common thing for one to call attention to the superb colouring of an easel picture by Correggio, but how rarely does an observer notice the colouring of his frescoes at Parma, which are his masterpieces? With some of the Venetian artists, the colouring is often so brilliant, not to say startling, that it seems to overpower the observer for a moment, and necessity compels him to accustom himself to the tones before considering the design. The colouring of Titian is not so strong, but it is always forcible; nevertheless one seldom hears a comment upon the colours in his works, the superior design and general beauty of the compositions far

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outweighing the purely sensorial elements therein. Titian in fact secured an approximately just balance between form and colour, while with his great followers the colour usually exceeded in strength the requirements of the design. In the time of Tintoretto and Veronese the prestige and prosperity of Venice were rapidly declining, but we have been so accustomed to associate with this city during the Renaissance, a luxurious life with something of the character of an Eastern court, that gorgeous colour of any kind does not seem out of place as one of its products. But this special appropriateness has not the effect of elevating the gay coloured voluptuous forms of the artists named, observable in their classical and allegorical works, to a high level in art. We cannot accommodate the forms to the ideas of the poets who invented or described them, or to the attributes with which they were commonly associated; and the colouring tends to bring them closer to earth. While we feel bound to admire the colouring, we are equally compelled to regret the particular application.⁶⁷

Speaking generally, when the design is good we remember the composition irrespective of the colours, but when the beauty of the work depends upon the colour harmony it fades from our memory as soon as our eyes experience new colour combinations. The imagination may call up the harmony again upon the mind, but the pleasure experienced from this reflection must be very feeble indeed because the senses are not directly affected thereby. It can have no more effect than a written description of the harmony.

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PLATE 20

PLATE 20



The Storm, by Jacob Ruysdael
(Berlin Museum)

(See page 206)

The Storm, by Jacob Ruysdael
(Berlin Museum)

(See [page 206](#))

The painter is at liberty to make what use he will of colour so long as he provides a thing of beauty, but he must remember that the appreciation of colour harmony is dependent not only upon the condition of the optic nerves of the observer, but also upon his experience at the time of observation. As to the first consideration little heed need be taken, because rudimentarily the nerve structure is equal or nearly so, in all persons, and while accident at birth may provide in some an advanced condition which in others is only obtained by exercise, yet in respect of colours, experience in complex harmony is gained involuntarily in contact with every-day nature. Hence for the purpose of the painter, all men may be considered alike in regard to the recognition of colour harmony. But individual experience at the time of observation of a painting varies largely,⁶⁸ a circumstance which is not of importance in dealing with works of the higher art, but becomes of great significance when considering the lower forms. No organ of the body is so susceptible to fatigue as the eye, and a painting of the kind known as a colour scheme may or may not be pleasing according as the tone is a relief or otherwise to the sight. Sometimes a few seconds are sufficient to fatigue the eye, as for instance when it is directed towards a vivid maroon hanging, but let a landscape with a grey tone be placed on the hanging and considerable pleasure will be involuntarily experienced through the relief to the optic nerves. Remove the picture to a grey wall, and it will instantly lose its charm, except such as it may possess apart from the colour.

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As with particular tones, so with colours generally. People habituated to conditions of nature where extremes of sun effects are uncommon, as in the northern latitudes, may be temporarily pleased with schemes of glowing colours on their walls, because these relieve the monotony of daily experience, but they must necessarily quickly tire, as with all exceptional conditions of life which are concerned with the senses only.

How soon one is fatigued with bright colours generally is obvious to any visitor to a public gallery which is crowded with pictures. In an hour or less the fatigue of his eyes becomes so extreme that his whole nervous system is affected, and he loses energy of both mind and body. But brilliant colors used sparingly with good designs may be a perpetual source of pleasure. Place a fine work by Rubens or Paolo Veronese in a living-room and it will attract attention every time one enters, for the colouring will always be a change from the normal eye experience. One turns to the picture involuntarily, and then the design is observed, and so one passes from sensual to intellectual pleasure. This process is repeated day by day, and the work never tires. Of course it is a condition that the design is able to hold the attention, otherwise the bright colours would serve little better purpose than if they defined a geometrical pattern.

Nowadays quite a number of paintings are produced in which unusual tones are given to signs or shadows, but these are not to be taken seriously by the earnest student. In the sunlight, amidst certain surroundings, the arm of a woman may appear for some moments to have a bluish tone, but the artist would be entirely wrong to paint a bluish arm. The picture is to be seen under all lights, and if the tones be contrary to general experience under any of these lights, then the work appears to be a falsity, for the artist does not, and cannot, reproduce the conditions which together bring about the exceptional colours. To the normal eye under ordinary circumstances, the arm of a woman is of flesh colour, and the artist is not at liberty to vary this tone. He has to represent what appears to be true in general opinion, whether it be really true or not under certain conditions. The dictum of Aristotle in regard to poetry—that what appears probable, though in reality is impossible, is better than what seems improbable but is really possible—is equally true in painting. In fact it is of more importance that this maxim should be remembered in painting than in poetry, because the signs of the painter are permanent. A poet or novelist may refer to a passing exceptional sun effect, for the impression on the mind of the reader would probably be as transient as, or more transient than, the effect itself, but with the painter the transient effect becomes fixed. The blue arm is always blue, and in a very short time becomes a disagreeable unreality. It may be claimed that the objectionable sun effects are not really exceptional, though they are seldom noticed; but for the purpose of art, what appears to be exceptional must be definitely regarded as so, and for this reason discarded by the artist who desires to paint a good picture.

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Generally then, the value of colour lies firstly in its correspondence with nature, for upon this depends its harmony and the assistance it lends to the recognition of the beauty in the whole composition. Beyond this it may or may not have an ephemeral value according to local conditions. In any case colour must ever be subordinated to design in a picture, and this is what Poussin meant when he said that particular attention to colour is an obstacle to the art student.

BOOK II

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ILLUSIONS IN THE PAINTER'S ART

INTRODUCTORY

The painter is occupied in a perpetual struggle to produce an illusion. He does not directly aim for this, but except in the very highest art where ideals are realized, the better the picture he paints, the greater the illusion. The natural test of the value of his work is its correspondence with nature, and the nearer it so corresponds, the more complete the illusion. But the whole picture is never an illusion (we leave out of consideration those instances where artificial devices are used to conceal the surroundings of the actual painted surface), for the frame and other material evidence inform us of the art. The illusion, when it exists, is forced upon our minds from moment to moment as our eyes travel over the work. It occurs to us perhaps that a face "lives," that the drapery is true to life, that the tones are real, and so on, and obviously these circumstances cannot impress us in this way unless we are momentarily deceived. And it is a sign of good quality in the work when we are so struck. This does not mean that the closer the imitation, the better the picture: on the contrary it is rare to find a good work of art produced by an exact imitator. The duty of the artist is to generalize everything that can be generalized without departing from the character of the thing represented. True there are degrees of generalization which depend on the nature of the design, the size of the work, the accessories, and other matters, but if a just balance of generalization be secured throughout, then the imitation is better than a closely detailed reproduction, because a work is always involuntarily judged from general, and not from particular, experience. A portrait for instance is a much better work of art if we can say of it "This is a good portrait of a man," than if we are compelled to confine ourselves to "This is a good portrait of Mr. Jones," even if the lineaments of the particular countenance are better defined in the latter example than in the former. The illusion would be stronger, for we are more intimately acquainted with "a man" than with "Mr. Jones." And so with accessories. An exceptionally fine rose or cabbage is never so good in a painting as one of these articles which is of an average type, because with this the illusion is more certain, for it is not likely to be disturbed with a mental inquiry into the unusual article.

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The painter may produce his illusions then without sacrificing anything in his art, and with the surety that good paintings necessarily result in momentary illusions except when form or expression above life experience are dealt with.

The first and most important illusion in the art is that of relief, for without this no other illusion can be produced. It is a general condition applying to all work on a flat surface. The other illusions that may be provided are: (a) of opening distance in landscape; (b) of motion in natural actions, as in flowing water; (c) of human and animal actions; (d) of suspension and motion in the air. The two first are dealt with under "Landscape"; the others are now considered.

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CHAPTER I

ILLUSION OF RELIEF

The greatest value in the illusion of relief lies in its assistance to recognition, for with the forms rounded by shading and separated with the appearance of relief which they have in nature, details of the work are less likely to complicate the design to the eye, than if the flat surface of the canvas be emphasized by the avoidance of relief. For the eye has to be considered before the mind, and it is of immense importance that the brain should have the least possible work to do in assisting the eye to interpret a thing of art. It would appear then that the minimum extent to which relief should be given in a painting is that point below which the things painted do not seem to have their three dimensions indicated. Beyond this the painter is at liberty to proceed as he pleases. Some great artists, notably Lionardo, were inclined to think that it is impossible to give too much relief to a figure, and this may be so theoretically, but practically there is a line to be drawn because life is limited, and after a certain point is reached, the work of shading for relief is so tedious an operation, that half a lifetime would be required to execute a picture of three or four figures if the artist wished to produce the strongest illusion in his power to give. A Russian artist of high merit who essayed the task, spent an average time of five years in ceaseless toil on each figure he completed, and even then frequently remarked that he had not given to his figures the full relief he desired to exhibit. It is well known that Lionardo gave long and close attention to this matter in his pictures, and he produced some extraordinary examples of relief, of which the finest is, perhaps, the Litta Madonna,^[a] but one cannot help regretting that he did not rest satisfied with a lower point of excellence in respect of the illusion, so that he could spend more time in general design.

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PLATE 21

PLATE 21



The Litta Madonna, by Lionardo da Vinci
(Hermitage)

(See page 240)

The Litta Madonna, by Lionardo da Vinci (Hermitage)

(See [page 240](#))

Apart from the relief given by shading in painting, there is an important mechanical method of improving the illusion, though this can only be occasionally adopted. The figures in any well painted picture will appear to stand out in high relief if we lose sight of the frame and other surroundings which distinctly inform us that

the work is a flat surface. This is why a painting invariably seems to improve if seen through a tube of such diameter that the frame is excluded from the vision. Advantage of this fact has been many times taken in the exhibition of single pictures, when, by the exclusion of the frame, the concealment of the edges of the work by curtain arrangements, and the concentration of all the available light upon the canvas, such perfect relief has been obtained that observers have been sometimes unable to distinguish the art from the life. It was the effect of the surroundings of a picture upon the sight, that led to a practice in design resulting in the exclusion of these surroundings to some extent when the eye is directed towards the centre of the work where the principal figure is commonly stationed. This practice is to avoid accessories as far as possible near the figure, and to provide considerable open space above it, and also at the sides when the composition allows, so that the observing eye has not of necessity to range close to the frame of the picture. In a good design of this kind the central figure or figures come out in strong relief, the attraction of the work being consequently much enhanced. Obviously the painted figures should be of life size, or nearly so, for the illusion of relief to be strikingly marked, and the conditions necessarily prevent the adoption of the scheme in a design of many figures. It is most successful with a single figure, and has been carried out with two figures, but never with more than two except in a few pictures of great size.

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The number of artists who have taken advantage of this mechanical device is not large, but it includes some of the first masters. The plan may be used in both exterior and interior scenes. In the former the figures must be thrown against the sky, and it is a distinct advantage if there be no trees or other objects on either side of the figures, which also stand out above the horizon, though this is immaterial if the figure be set in a confined space, as an arch, or between the columns of a loggia, and the foliage is not seen through this space.

The most famous pictures where the scheme is used in exterior work are amongst the finest portraits known to us, namely, Lionardo's *Mona Lisa*, and Raphael's *Maddalena Doni* and *Angelo Doni*.^[b] In 1504 or thereabouts, Lionardo painted a portrait of *Mona Lisa* sitting in a loggia, the wall of which reached to a third of the height of the canvas.^[c] On the wall at each side of the design is a column divided down the centre by the edge of the canvas. There is a landscape setting, in which the middle distance is hidden by rising ground, and only part of the head appears above the horizon. In 1505 Raphael made a study from this picture in which he retained the columns, but raised the wall, and threw the whole head of the figure against the sky. He used this study for the portrait of *Maddalena Doni*, but in this he still further improved the design by removing the columns, and extending to the shoulders that part of the figure above the horizon, the line of which divides the picture in equal halves, instead of being drawn at two thirds of the height as in the first *Mona Lisa*. When Lionardo executed the Louvre portrait of this lady, he removed the columns, but slightly reduced the portion of the head seen against the sky. Raphael's plan, which was also used in the portrait of *Angelo Doni*, is obviously far superior to that in the *Mona Lisa* design, for the relief is necessarily better marked. The scheme was not new to Raphael at the time, except in portraiture, for it is exhibited in three of his very early sacred works.^[d]

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One of the best examples in existence of this method of securing relief is Tintoretto's *Presentation of the Virgin*.^[e] On the right of the picture is a wide flight of stairs, curving round as they ascend. The Virgin is moving up these steps in advance of some attendants, and the curved stairway enables all the figures to stand out in fine relief against the sky. If well managed some considerable space above the figures is sufficient for the illusion even if the sides are partly closed, as in Albertinelli's beautiful *Salutation*.^[f] Where only a small portion of the figure can be shown above the horizon, the use of a faint far distance helps in the scheme of relief. Thus, in Marco Basaiti's *Christ on the Mount of Olives*,^[g] where Christ stands on the top of a rock which hides the middle distance, His head only is above the horizon, but the rest of the figure is thrown against a faint far distance, the relief being excellent. A modification of this plan is observable in Lionardo's *Virgin and Child with St. Anne*.^[h]

So far as the writer has been able to ascertain, the first known painting where a crucifix is thrown against the sky is by Antonella da Messina.^[i] The Cross is fixed in the foreground and extends to the top of the picture, being cut half-way up and just below the feet of Christ by the line of the horizon. The relief is very fine. This scheme was imitated with more or less success but never quite so perfectly, till Titian produced his magnificent *Cross*. Here the Crucifix is cast against a sombre evening sky, with the Virgin and two imploring Saints at the foot.^[j] Rubens improved upon this design with several variations. In one he hid the foot of the Cross, though the tops of buildings are seen in the middle distance^[k]; and in another, which is still finer, the time of the scene is late evening, and dark vague outlines suggest a landscape. But all these examples are cast into the shade by Van Dyck's Antwerp picture, than which there is certainly no more impressive painted Crucifixion in existence. In this the foot of the Cross is not shown, nor is there any ground to be seen, and the figure stands out against a dark forbidding sky, awful, but sublimely real, as if set in boundless space for all eternity.^[l]

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There are many variations of the above designs, particularly among the Works of Venetian artists, but those quoted may be regarded as typical. How easy it is to hinder the illusion is seen in Sodoma's *Sacrifice of Abraham*,^[m] where both figures are set against the sky, but trees behind them and at the side destroy the relief, though the foliage is by no means thick. In Girolami da Libri's *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*, a pomegranate tree interposes^[n]; and a curtain falls at the back of a group by Bernadino da Conti,^[o] the illusion in both cases being consequently robbed of its effect.

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Some of the Dutch artists of the seventeenth century used a clear sky for the purpose of enhancing the relief of their figures, but as these are usually of a comparatively small size, the result is only partially effective. Albert Cuyp and Philip Wouwerman painted many pictures with men and animals silhouetted above the horizon, and Paul Potter executed a few of the kind, but of all Dutch painters, Jan Steen secured the best relief with his *Terrace Scene*.^[p] In more recent times the scheme has seldom been adopted for the purpose of relief, but a few Scottish painters practised it in the early nineteenth century. Simson followed Cuyp's plan,^[q] and Dyce in a sacred piece equalled the best of the old masters in his manner of producing the illusion.^[r] Grant also painted a fine example.^[s] Some portrait painters of the English school of the eighteenth century used the scheme in a partial way, but they commonly placed clouds behind the figures thrown against the sky, thus disturbing the illusion.

There is only one method of using this device for assisting in the production of relief in interiors. This is to throw the figure against a high wall which is undecorated or nearly so. The figure must be some little distance in front of the wall, and it is observable that the best effect is obtained when the light throughout the

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room is equal, but in any case the wall should not have less light than the figure. Inasmuch as the figure has to be of life size or nearly so, to produce the desired result, a very large picture would be necessary for the representation of a standing adult; hence the plan is not attempted with a life-size figure, except with a sitting adult or a standing child. Before this scheme was used for the human figure, that master of relief, M. A. Caravaggio, adopted it for a simple still-life work.^[t] A basket of fruit on a plain table, with a high bare wall at the back—the canvas now sombre and darkened, like the soul of the artist, but still remarkable for the relief: this was the first application to interiors of a plan which had been used in exteriors by some of the greatest masters for more than a century.

So far as can be gathered from existing works, thirty or forty years elapsed after the picture of Caravaggio was painted before the scheme was brought into use for the human figure in interiors. In 1630, or thereabouts, Velasquez produced his Christ at the Column.^[u] Here the wall is not actually high, but Christ is shown seated on the floor, and hence there is ample wall space over which the eye may rove. It is possible that the adoption of the plan in this instance was the result of accident, but the very unusual pose of Christ hardly warrants the suggestion. Velasquez painted no more pictures of the kind till a quarter of a century later, when he produced *Las Meninas*. In this the relief is excellent, but it would have been still better without the picture on the wall, and the open door in the background, though the figure seen on the steps through the doorway lends assistance to the illusion.

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Towards the middle of the seventeenth century, some followers of the Neapolitan school used the plan occasionally, but the best existing Italian works of the time where it is seen are from the hand of Evaristo Baschenis, a Bergamese monk. He was an excellent painter of still-life, and produced several pictures, each with a boy or a woman seated in the middle of a room near a plain table on which rests a dish of fruit or a gathering of various articles, while at the back there is a high bare wall. In all of these works a fine relief is exhibited, though they are now considerably marred by darkened shadows. A few years later the plan was adopted by some Dutch artists, and later still in France and Germany. Chardin, who in more ways than one seems to have been a French Baschenis, used it in several pictures. In recent times since the study of Velasquez has become a vogue, many artists have successfully followed the plan, and one of the finest examples of it in existence—Lydia Emmet's *Patricia*^[v]—dates as late as 1915.

There are several minor mechanical ways of enhancing relief, most of them providing a setting which acts as a kind of inner frame to the design, the object being to reduce the effect of the actual frame in disturbing the illusion. Portrait painters of the Dutch, Flemish, and English schools, have often placed half length figures in painted ovals on canvas rectangles, and in the case of Hals he sometimes further improved the illusion by extending a hand of the subject over the oval. Hanneman used this oval in a most exceptional way. On a large canvas he painted the bust portraits of Constantine Huygens and his six children, each in a separate oval, the father being in the centre.^[w] The scheme is strangely effective, for the attention of the observer is involuntarily confined to one portrait at a time. In genre pictures a doorway may act as the inner frame, but this is only of material value if the picture be of considerable size. The Dutch painters, notably Gerard Dow, loved to paint figures leaning over window-sills, this method usually enhancing the relief, because the eye is apt to be confined for a time to the window-frame. Perhaps the best use of a window for the purpose of relief is Rembrandt's *Samson Menacing His Father-in-law*, where the old man's head and hands, of life size, are seen protruding from a small window.^[x]

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FOOTNOTES:

- [a] At the Hermitage. See Plate 21.
- [b] The first at the Louvre, and the others at the Pitti Palace, Florence.
- [c] This painting, or one corresponding to it, is in the Boston Museum, U. S. A. See Note 56.
- [d] Saint Sebastian, at Bergamo; The Redeemer at Brescia; and The Prophets and Sybils at Perugia.
- [e] *Madonna del Orto*, Venice.
- [f] Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
- [g] Venice Academy.
- [h] The Louvre.
- [i] National Gallery, London.
- [j] Ancona Gallery.
- [k] Antwerp Museum.
- [l] This work was repeated several times with variations. See Plate 22.
- [m] Pisa Cathedral.
- [n] National Gallery, London.
- [o] Poldo Pezzoli Museum, Milan.
- [p] National Gallery, London.
- [q] National Gallery, Edinburgh.
- [r] *St. John Leading the Virgin from the Tomb*, National Gallery of British Art, London.
- [s] *The Countess of Chesterfield and Mrs. Anson*, Gilmour Collection, Scotland.
- [t] Ambrogia Museum, Milan.
- [u] The Prado, Madrid.
- [v] Exhibition of the National (American) Association of Portrait Painters, N. Y., 1915. See Plate 23.
- [w] Hague Gallery.
- [x] Berlin Gallery.

CHAPTER II

ILLUSION OF MOTION

With human figures—With animals.

From the earliest times great sculptors, in producing a single figure in action, have chosen for the representation a moment of rest between two steps in the action, so that the character of these steps is instantly recognized by the observer, whose imagination unconsciously carries through the action. If every part of the figure is built up conformably with the action, with due regard to the position from which the statue is to be seen, an illusion of motion will follow, though this is necessarily so rapid that the effect upon the observer is indirect: he translates the impression into appreciation of the lifelike attitude of the figure. Nearly all the ancient Greek sculptured figures known to us, commencing with those of Myron, are characterized by this excellence in design, and so with the best work of the Italian Renaissance. Modern sculptors of repute have also endeavoured to provide the illusion, Rodin in particular holding that it should be the aim of every sculptor.⁶⁹

The painter is in a different position from the sculptor because the latter may design his figure with special reference to the position it is to occupy, and so he can in a measure compel the observer to see it in a particular way. Thus, the base of the statue may be some height above the ground, in which case the observer must necessarily run his eyes up the figure from the feet; or it may be seen first in a three-quarter view so that the position of the limbs will apparently change as the observer moves to the front. Such accidental circumstances may be considered by the sculptor in his plan. The painter has no such advantage, for his figure is the same from whichever point it is to be seen, within reasonable limits; but he has compensation in the use of tones and accessories of which the sculptor is deprived. That the painter may provide an excellent illusion with a single figure in action is evidenced by Raphael's superb St. Margaret, where the Saint is seen stepping over the dragon.^[a] Every part of her body, and every fold of drapery is used in the expression of movement, the effect being so perfect that we cannot disassociate the figure from the action.⁷⁰

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The painters of the first century of the Renaissance never properly represented a figure in the act of walking, and there are few pictures even of the fifteenth century where a serious attempt is made to choose the best moment in which to exhibit such a figure. The first successful essay in the task seems to have been in The Tribute Money of Masaccio,^[b] who indeed was fifty years ahead of his fellows in the faithful representation of action. There was a jump of two decades or so after Masaccio to the next good figure, which was that of an attendant in Filippo Lippi's complex tondo at Florence.^[c] This figure must have caused considerable surprise at the time, for it was copied into several works by subsequent artists, notably Domenico Ghirlandaio,^[d] and probably suggested the fine figure carrying a jar of water on her head in Raphael's Fire at the Borgo.^[e] But Raphael, who mastered every problem in composition, solved this one so completely that he left nothing for his successors to learn respecting it. Not only are the limbs of his moving figures so perfectly arranged that we see only action, but folds of the drapery used on the figures are sufficient to indicate preceding movements,^[f] and this is so even when the figures are stationary, but the head, arms, or upper part of the body have moved.^[g] This extraordinary feature of Raphael's work will ever form a subject of astonishment and admiration.

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The painter has a comparatively easy task in presenting an illusion with several figures presumed to be moving, for he has only to comply with two simple conditions. The first is that the particular step represented in the act of progression of any individual should vary from the steps of the persons immediately behind or in front of him; and secondly that the actions of the different persons be connected with each other so far as possible. With these conditions reasonably fulfilled, illusion of motion necessarily follows. Naturally in such a mechanical matter, the character of the invention depends upon the scale of the design. When the moving figures are presumed to be comparatively near at hand, the position of the limbs must be entirely presented, or the progression will appear broken. The effective illusion presented in Burne-Jones's Golden Staircase is due to his ingenuity in so arranging the numerous figures descending the winding stairs, that all their feet are visible. In the case of a crowd of figures of whom some are supposed to be moving and others standing still, the visibility of the limbs is of less importance than the connection of the various actions. In Menzel's Market in Verona,^[h] the illusion, which is remarkable, is entirely produced by the skill in which innumerable instances of action are made dependent upon others. An illusion is created in the same way though in a lesser degree by Gustave Doré in several works.^[i] When the motion arises from the actions of the arms of a number of persons, it suffices if the arms are in various positions, as in Menzel's Iron Mill, and Cavalori's Woolworkers^[j] where many men are using long tools; but if the limbs are working together, an illusion is impossible. The beauty of Guardi's great picture, Regatta on the Grand Canal, is much diminished by the attitude of the gondoliers, who all hold their poles in the same position.

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PLATE 22



Christ on the Cross, by Van Dyck
(Antwerp Museum)

(See page 244)

Christ on the Cross, by Van Dyck
(Antwerp Museum)

(See [page 244](#))

Where many persons are moving together in the same direction, great care has to be exercised in presenting the actions conformably with the rate at which the movement is proceeding, for upon this of course depends the angles of the bended knees, and the extent to which some of the feet may be carried from the ground. In slow natural movements, as where a number of men are dragging a heavy burden, it is rare to find an artist wrong in his representation^[k]; but in the case of numerous figures walking irregularly, a true nearground design is uncommon, the painter usually giving insufficient action, with the result that his figures present a stagy appearance.^[l] But a defect of this kind is not so serious as where several men, not being in marching order, are moving in the same direction with their feet in similar positions, and each with a foot off the ground,^[m] for this is only an aggravation of a case where the picture shows but a single figure walking with one foot in the air.

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An illusion of motion may be given to a line of figures in the middle distance of a landscape by simply winding the road along which they pass^[n]; but the angles of the turns must be large, for when they are small, or when there is a distinct zigzag, the illusion is destroyed through the lengthy operation of the eye in comprehending the whole scene.

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When many figures are moving close together, even if they be marching to the same step, an illusion of movement may be given by the representation of a flying figure proceeding in the same direction. This scheme has been adopted in sculpture with high success, as in the Shaw Memorial at Boston,^[o] and the Marseillaise of Rude.^[p] In painting, several horizontal figures may be used, but they must be placed irregularly to avoid the appearance of formality. Some modern French artists are responsible for effective designs indicating the arrival of spring by an overhead figure flying above young people moving through flowery fields.^[q]

A suggestion of motion may be obtained by exhibiting a number of persons engaged in similar actions, but

shown in a consecutive series of stages thereof. This plan is admirably worked out by Watteau in his Embarkation for Cythera.^[t] A line of couples commences at the right of the picture, proceeds towards the left, and then descends a slope to the place of embarkation. The first couple are sitting and conversing, the next are in the act of rising, and the third have just risen and are about to follow the other couples already walking, the whole device being most effective. A similar kind of illusion is caused by Rubens in his Diana and Nymphs pursued by Satyrs.^[s] On the extreme right of the picture some of the figures are stationary; then come a few who are struggling, and finally some running nymphs and satyrs, a perfect progression of events being suggested.

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Illusion of motion is more easily obtained with animals than with human figures, providing they are fairly large, because of the greater number of their feet and the consequent wider variation between the apparent and the real movements. It is exceedingly difficult to produce a suggestion of motion with a single animal represented in a natural attitude, but the painter is only concerned with what appears to be natural or probable, and not with what is actually so. We have only a general idea of the action of a horse in nature from what we see, and consequently in design this action must be generalized irrespective of natural possibilities. Some artists combine parts of different actions as exhibited in a series of photographs in order to represent a moment of action as it is generalized to the eye, but this is only serviceable where the presumed action of the animal is one of a series of similar events, as in walking or trotting. It would not answer in the case of an isolated action, as jumping or rearing, because such actions vary with the circumstances surrounding them, as the height of the jump or the cause of the rearing. In these events therefore the artist may exaggerate to a great extent without appearing to present impossible movements. In fact nearly all good pictures of one or two horses in action are strong exaggerations of nature, but this hardly affects their æsthetic worth because the action is not recognized as abnormal or impossible. The finest painting of horses in action known to us, is Regnault's Automedon with the Horses of Achilles,^[t] where the animals exhibit spirit and movement far above experience, but even if we did not know that they are presumed to be immortal, we should only regard the action as exceptional, for it does not appear to be impossible.

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There is ample scope for the presentation of an illusion with a number of moving animals. All that is necessary is that they should be kept fairly well together with their legs in various moving attitudes. This illusion is perfectly managed by many of the French painters of battle scenes in the nineteenth century, notably Horace Vernet,^[u] Gros,^[v] Chartier,^[w] Morot,^[x] and Meissonier.^[y] The action in the cavalry charges of Morot and Chartier is amazingly true to life. Even three or four animals will suffice for an illusion,^[z] but this cannot be provided with the smaller animals, as sheep or goats, because although a series of progressive actions may be given to those outside animals in a flock whose legs are visible to the spectator of the picture, the scale to which they are painted is necessarily so small that the eye has an entirely insufficient range for operating the illusion. Where several horses are represented as moving at considerable speed, it is necessary that some of their feet should touch the ground, otherwise the illusion is destroyed, or else the animal may appear to be racing through the air.^[aa] The effect is not so disturbing when all the feet of the moving animals are on the ground,^[ab] or where they are hidden by herbage,^[ac] or where all the animals are on their hind legs,^[ad] though in these instances an illusion is almost impossible.

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In cases where horses and men are crowded together, and are struggling in confusion, it is only necessary in order to provide an illusion, that no action should be entirely separated from the others. There was a fine example of this work in a lost drawing or painting of Titian, of Pharaoh's Host Overwhelmed in the Red Sea^[ae]; and many artists of the Renaissance produced like illusions in pictures of the rape of the Sabines. Where the movement is spread over a large area, and the scale to which the animals are drawn is comparatively small, the various groups engaged must obviously be connected together in a series. Franz Adam arranges a scheme of this kind in a battle scene, using running soldiers or hauled guns as links in the chain.^[af]

An illusion of motion is sometimes assisted by the title of the picture. A remarkable example of this is Robert's The Israelites Depart. Although individual action cannot be distinguished owing to the scale of the design, yet when one is acquainted with the title, the imagination is instinctively set to work, and the enormous crowds packing the wide streets seem to be streaming in one direction. Obviously for the title to have this effect, the number of signs must be overwhelming, and there must be no possibility of interpreting the picture in two ways; that is to say, accessory signs must be used to indicate the direction in which the crowd is moving.⁷¹

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FOOTNOTES:

- [a] At the Louvre. See Plate 27.
- [b] Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence.
- [c] Madonna and Child with other scenes from her life, Uffizi, Florence.
- [d] Birth of St. John Baptist, Santa Maria Novello, Florence.
- [e] Fresco at the Vatican.
- [f] See Deliverance of St. Peter, Flight of Lot and his Family, Moses Striking the Rock, and others at the Vatican.
- [g] The Transfiguration, Vatican.
- [h] Dresden Gallery.
- [i] See Samson Slaying the Philistines.
- [j] Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.
- [k] For good examples see Benoit's Morning of July 14, 1789, Poynter's Building the Treasure City, and Colton's Royal Artillery Memorial (sculptured relief).
- [l] Dehodencq's Bohemians Returning from a Fête, Chaumont Museum.
- [m] As in Breton's Cry of Alarm.
- [n] Diaz's Descent of the Bohemians.
- [o] By A. Saint-Gaudens.

- [p] Arc de Triomphe, Paris.
- [q] See Aman-Jean's decorative panels at the Sorbonne.
- [r] In the Louvre, and repeated with variations at Berlin.
- [s] The Prado, Madrid. See Plate 27.
- [t] Boston Museum, U. S. A. See Plate 28.
- [u] La Smalah at Versailles.
- [v] The Combat of Nazareth.
- [w] Jena, 1806, and Hanau, 1813.
- [x] Reichsoffen.
- [y] 1814.
- [z] Rosa Bonheur's Ploughing in Nivernois.
- [aa] Fromentin's Couriers des Ouled Nayls, Luxembourg; Schreyer's The Attack, N. Y. Public Library; and Gericault's Epsom, Louvre.
- [ab] A. Brown's The Drove.
- [ac] Uhde's Cavalry Soldiers Going into Action, Muffel Collection.
- [ad] Snyder's Hunt, Munich Gallery.
- [ae] An engraving on wood by A. Andreani is in existence.
- [af] A Bavarian Regiment before Orleans, Munich.

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CHAPTER III

ILLUSION OF SUSPENSION AND MOTION IN THE AIR

With the assistance of drapery—Of clouds—Of winged figures—Miscellaneous devices.

The representation of figures suspended in the air, or moving through it, has never offered much trouble to painters, though necessarily involving an apparent miracle. The very slightest pretended physical assistance suffices for the illusion, and this help is usually rendered in the shape of flying drapery, winged figures, clouds, or artificial devices based upon the contact of two or more figures. The only difficulty met with is in respect of an upward vertical movement. Here, wings or clouds can scarcely be made to differentiate between a rising and a falling movement, and flying drapery is of little service inasmuch as a rush through the air would, if the feat were actually performed, cause the drapery to cling to the figure. The surest remedy for the disability is to support the figure directly by winged figures placed at a considerable angle from the vertical, but this plan is only rarely adopted by great masters because of the consequent complications in the design of the group. Since flying drapery is commonly added to the figure presumed to be ascending, and seeing that artists almost invariably insist upon giving their ascending figures upright attitudes, it is seldom that the movement is correctly expressed. Usually the figure appears to be held immovably in suspension, but occasionally, owing to the drapery arrangement, a descending movement is indicated.^[a] Without the assistance of winged figures, the illusion of ascension can only be given when the figure is shown directed upwards at an angle of at least fifteen or twenty degrees from the vertical. As a rule the larger the angle, the more easy is the production of an illusion. With a fairly large angle, and an appropriate arrangement of limbs and drapery, heavy figures can be made to appear naturally ascending, as in Rubens's Boreas and Orithyia, both voluptuous forms.^[b]

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Only a very few of the first artists have been able to give an illusion of movement in the air by use of drapery alone, the device adopted by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel frescoes being perhaps the most effective. He throws behind the moving figure of the Deity a large fold of drapery, which assumes an oval or nearly round shape, the whole acting as a concave framework for the Deity and attending Angels.^[c] The success of the plan arises of course from the apparent resistance to the air offered by a large and compact surface. This form with more or less marked modifications in the concavity was probably used by the ancient Greeks in their paintings, as a nearly similar arrangement is found in a sculptured figure which has come down to us, though in this case a running movement is indicated.^[d] It is also seen in some Pompeian frescoes, where it is applied to figures moving through the air and on the ground.^[e] Raphael adopted the device occasionally,^[f] but generally varied it with excellent effect by flowing out from the waist a large scarf-like fold to take a circular form above the head and shoulders of the figure,^[g] or by causing heavy drapery to flow out from the lower part of the body.^[h] No doubt in the case of Raphael, the extraordinary grace of figure, and the perfect pose of the limbs, assist the illusion. Tintoretto and other artists of the Renaissance used an oval drapery in a similar way; while sometimes the figure is half hidden within it,^[i] and Le Sueur wrapped part of the figure in folds before forming the oval.^[j] There seems to be a simple virtue in any oval form connected with figures presumed to be suspended in the air. It was quite common in the early days of the Renaissance for the Deity or Virgin and Child to be placed in a regular oval framework, sometimes supported by Angels or cherubs, and the illusion was usually successful.^[k] Rubens by way of experiment went a little further in one picture, for he placed the Virgin and Child in an oval picture frame supported by cherubs.^[l] This however does not seem so novel as some of Perugino's ovals which are bordered with the heads of cherubs.^[m]

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Wings are seldom sufficient to suggest lightness in the air, because they can scarcely be designed of the size and strength which we judge to be proportionate to the presumed weight of the body, without making the form appear abnormal, though there are instances in which partial success has been achieved by using

comparatively small figures and giving them unusually large wings.^[ln] The use of more than a single pair of wings is hardly permissible because of the apparent anomaly. Actually one pair is not less incomprehensible from an anatomical point of view than several pairs, but custom has driven from our minds any suggestion of incongruity in respect of the representation of the common type of Angel. Naturally when skilfully arranged, the more wings, the stronger the illusion of flight, and if a habit of giving four wings to an Angel were engendered, we should perhaps see nothing strange in them. Even six wings have been given to Angels without making them appear ungraceful.^[ol]

When there is no assistance, as clouds or flowing drapery, lent to Angels to promote the illusion of suspension, it is necessary to give them an attitude which is nearly horizontal. Properly managed, a pair of comparatively small wings may in this way appear to support a heavy form.^[pj] Luini actually adds the weight of the body of St. Catherine to three Angels, flying horizontally, who carry her to the tomb^[q]; an invention, strangely enough, followed by Kulmbach in Germany at about the same time.^[r] In both cases the illusion is excellent. Some of the early Flemish and German masters, including Van Eyck^[s] and Holbein,^[t] employed Angels in scenes with the Virgin to hold suspended behind her seat, large falls of brocaded material, and it is curious to note that the Angels themselves seem to be supported by the drapery. In order to assist the suggestion of lightness, Perugino sometimes arched the lower limbs of the Angels, adding a narrow tape scroll^[u]; an addition improved upon by Raphael who substituted for the scroll a loosened girdle flying out from the waist.^[v]

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The most frequently used form of support for figures in suspension are irregular masses of clouds, upon which the figures sit or stand, and occasionally are partly enfolded therein. Sometimes the cloud bank is more or less shaped for the purpose of relief, or for variety in design. Thus, Raphael makes part of the cloud a perfect footrest for the Virgin,^[w] and Palma Giovane does a similar thing for a figure of Christ,^[x] but in this case the illusion is hazarded as the seat is not directly indicated. Ingres produces an excellent illusion by making the footrest a small separate cloud,^[y] which is a variation from the practice of many painters of the Renaissance, who used a separate cloud for each personage in the composition, or even with each foot as with Carlo Crivelli.^[z] In a fresco of the Evangelists at Florence, each of them sits with his insignia on a foliated bank of clouds.^[aa] Perugino in using a similar plan sometimes places the clouds at the bottom of the picture, no part of the earth being seen, so that the illusion is considerably enhanced.^[ab] At other times he shows Angels apparently running through the air, with each front foot resting on a tiny cloud, giving the impression that it is fastened there.^[ac] Durer extended this plan by directly attaching a small cloud to each foot, the effect being somewhat whimsical.^[ad] Titian was unsuccessful in the use of an isolated cloud.^[ae] In a Resurrection scene Christ stands on a small thin cloud, and holds a flag-pole, the lower end of which rests upon the cloud. Obviously with such a design no suggestion of ascent can enter the mind.

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PLATE 23



Patricia, by Lydia Emmet
(Private owner, N. Y.)

(See page 247)

Patricia, by Lydia Emmet
(Private owner, N. Y.)

(See [page 247](#))

Some artists, as Luca Signorelli,^[af] hide the lower part of the figure behind clouds, but this method, while indicating suspension, cannot provide an illusion of movement without an assisting device. Thus Schonherr shows an Angel so concealed in a nearly horizontal position with wings fully expanded, the effect being good.^[ag] When a figure is suspended on clouds, very rarely indeed is repose emphasized by placing it in a horizontal position, but Poussin once adopts the plan,^[ah] and Guercino goes so far as to represent a reclining Angel resting her head on her hand as if suffering from fatigue.^[ai] Perfect repose of the Deity in an upright position on clouds is produced by Gustave Doré, who reduces the size of the earth, above which He stands, to an insignificant proportion, so that the imagination sends it moving round below Him.^[aj]

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Quite a number of artists represent the suspended figures standing on the backs of cherubs or cupids, which in their turn are supported by clouds, as for instance, R. Ghirlandaio,^[ak] Liberale di Verona,^[al] and Francesco da Cotignola.^[am] Fra Bartolommeo places a single foot of the Deity on a cherub who holds a banderole, the illusion being excellent.^[an] Domenichino adopts a most ingenious device in St. Paul's Vision. He shows the Apostle being carried to Heaven by winged cherubs, who appear to find the weight considerable, and to struggle under it. There is little else to induce the illusion, which is complete.^[ao] A similar scheme is successfully managed in Prud'hon's Abduction of Psyche. Tassaert uses a like device, but in addition has a cherub supporting each arm of the Virgin. Palma Vecchio makes the Virgin stand on the outstretched wings of a cherub, but her robe blows upwards, giving her the appearance of descending instead of ascending.^[ap] Rubens has three alternatives in the use of cherubs. The figure sits on clouds with feet resting on small globes sustained by cherubs^[aq]; or the cherubs hold the dress and mantle of the Virgin; or they help to control the clouds upon which she sits.^[ar] In some of his pictures of the Immaculate Conception, Murillo also uses globes, but places the cherubs on them instead of under. Francia has a picture in which cherubs hold up clouds bearing the Virgin,^[as] a device once used by Rembrandt.^[at] Genga shows the Deity

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kneeling upon the heads of cherubs, a scheme not satisfactory.^[au] Cherubs were used by Titian to hold up the Virgin and clouds,^[av] while Velasquez rested the robes on clouds, but used cherubs to sustain the Holy Mother.^[aw]

The illusion is usually more complete when Angels are used instead of cherubs for support, apparently because they may be presumed to have greater strength, and the plan was adopted by some of the earlier masters of the Renaissance. The simple design of Rubens in resting the foot of Christ on the arm of a flying Angel is quite successful.^[ax] Fontana places the Deity on clouds supported by Angels,^[ay] a method adopted by Granacci, who however assists the illusion by adding two Angels who are directly supporting the figure.^[az] Peter Cornelius has the Deity with His foot on a small globe which is held in position by Angels.^[ba] A fine example of their use is shown by Guthertz. Two Angels with large outstretched wings are bearing the body of a woman to Heaven. She lies recumbent upon a lengthy hammock formed by the robes of the Angels, the ends of the drapery being gathered up by the flying cherubs.^[bb] The illusion is perfect. Rembrandt also has a beautiful design in a Resurrection scene, for he shows the figure of Christ as a shade whose hands are held by a flying Angel lifting Him to Heaven.^[bc] A few artists, as Poussin^[bd] and Bouguereau,^[be] use Angels to carry the figure with no other assisting device, but if the body is recumbent it is necessary that the Angels should be in a nearly upright position, otherwise they will appear to be moving horizontally.^[bf] Rubens in an Ascension uses the strange method of placing an Angel beneath Christ, but without touching Him.^[bg] The drapery flies out at the back, so that without some assistance he would appear to be descending; but the Angel below, with her hands held up, seems to correct the position. Guido Reni carries the Virgin up with Angels who support her beneath, and she seems in fact to be standing on their shoulders.^[bh] In one instance Correggio substitutes a smiling boy for an Angel, and he holds up a cloud on which the Virgin sits.^[bi] There are many works where winged figures hold a body in suspension, most of them providing excellent illusions. Among the best is Lux's Sarpedon, where the body of the Trojan is held up for Jupiter to kiss.^[bj]

Even a simple banderole or scarf suffices to indicate movement in the air if well arranged. Usually a flying cherub holds an end of the banderole, and Ferri shows a wingless putto even, flying with no other assistance.^[bk] Boucher creates an illusion by the bold device of connecting two cupids with a narrow scarf blown out into a semicircle^[bl]; and in another instance very narrow tape streamers suffice.^[bm]

The use of thick smoke for suspension purposes is nearly always successful, because volumes of smoke in nature necessarily tend to move upwards; but obviously this scheme can only be arranged when an altar is possible. The plan is not uncommon in pictures relating to Cain and Abel, and the Translation of Enoch. In one of the latter subject, Hoet makes part of the smoke from an altar envelop the surrounding ground so as to widen the volume, while Schnorr achieves the same end by curling round the smoke as it ascends into the form of a large saucer upon which the Deity sits,^[bn] a method slightly varied by Amiconi.^[bo]

Where a number of figures are connected together in a circular form in the air, the double illusion of suspension and motion follows naturally, provided their attitudes indicate a circular movement. An excellent example of this is shown in a picture by Botticelli, where Angels dance in the air over the hut of the Nativity.^[bp] The finest work of the kind in existence is probably Schwind's Pleiads, in which the stars are represented by a circle of beautiful nude women.^[bq] Extraordinary activity is suggested by the perfect arrangement of the limbs and light flowing drapery used. Bouguereau has a work of a similar kind, The Lost Pleiad, but here the dancers are upright, and the circle is only accessory to the title figure.^[br] Watteau is fairly successful in giving an illusion of suspension to cupids even with a half circle, though the invention is somewhat formal.^[bs]

Some of the devices used to bring about an illusion are most ingenious. Thus in his Bacchus and Ariadne,^[bt] Tintoretto actually applies a disability of his art for the purpose. Venus is shown in a horizontal position in the air, placing a crown of stars upon the head of Ariadne. Bacchus is standing by, and the form of the goddess floats just at the back of him, the lower side of her hip being on a level with the top of his head. Seeing that the head is covered with a profusion of vine leaves, it is impossible for the artist to indicate, or the observer to recognize, that the goddess does not actually touch the head of Bacchus, and she apparently balances herself upon his head while crowning Ariadne, the artist having been careful to place the centre of gravity of her figure over the apparent point of contact. A similar kind of illusion is provided by Burne-Jones, whose Angel of the Annunciation is upright in midair near the ground, but her feet seem to find support on the branches of a shrub.^[bu] Rossetti, in the same subject, shows the Angel with his feet wrapped in flames, the weight being thus apparently removed. The design seems bizarre, perhaps because of the absence of an expression of surprise which one would expect to see on the countenance of the Virgin at so extraordinary a phenomenon.⁷³ Schwind also uses a disability of his art for an illusion in his Phantom of the Forest.^[bv] She moves near the ground away from the spectator with such rapidity that her robe, a simple rectangular piece of drapery, has opened out wide from the front, and hides her figure from the shoulders down, so that from the point of view of the observer she may, or may not, be touching the ground as she moves.

How slight the apparent support need be, is indicated in Bouguereau's Aurora and Twilight. Each figure is represented by a nude woman holding a light scarf, the first rapidly, and the second slowly, skimming the surface of a stream of water with soft touches of the feet, and yet there is no anomaly that strikes the mind. A still more daring device is used by Battistello, though quite successfully. He places two wingless putti in the air, but one holds up the other, and this action seems to sustain them both.^[bw] Another amazing design is from the hand of A. P. Roll, who shows a nude-man in the air clutching another, and apparently struggling to pull him down, yet the action seems perfectly natural.^[bx]

FOOTNOTES:

[a] As in Murillo's Ascension of Christ, Madrid Academy.

[b] Venice Academy.

[c] See Plate 24.

[d] The Son of Niobe, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.⁷²

[e] Herculaneum et Pompei, vol. iv., by Roux Ainé.

- [f] Ceiling of the Hall of Heliodorus, Vatican.
- [g] Vatican frescoes God Separating Water and Earth, and God Appearing to Isaac.
- [h] The Creation of the Sun and Moon.
- [i] Poussin's St. Francis Xavier, Louvre.
- [j] The Virgin appearing to St. Martin.
- [k] See the Assumption of Orcagna, and of Luca di Tome; Giunto Pisano's Christ and the Virgin; and Mainardi's Madonna giving her Girdle to St. Thomas.
- [l] Virgin and Child, Chiesa Nuovo, Rome.
- [m] Ascension of Christ, Perugia; Assumption, Florence Academy, and others.
- [n] J. H. Witt's Bless the Lord.
- [o] Picart's The Burning Coal.
- [p] Rembrandt's The Angel quitting Tobias, Louvre.
- [q] The Brera, Milan.
- [r] St. Mary's, Krakau.
- [s] Virgin and Child at the Fountain, Antwerp.
- [t] Virgin and Child, Augsburg.
- [u] The Ascension, Borgo San Sepolcro, Perugia.
- [v] Creation of Woman, Castello Gallery; Prophets and Sybils, Perugia, and others.
- [w] Foligna Madonna, Vatican.
- [x] Christ in Judgment, Venice.
- [y] The Oath of Louis XIII.
- [z] Coronation of the Virgin, Milan.
- [aa] Santa Maria. By an unknown artist of the Ghirlandaio school.
- [ab] Christ's Rule.
- [ac] Madonna and Child with Penitents, and others.
- [ad] The Virgin with a Canary, Berlin.
- [ae] Urbino Gallery.
- [af] Madonna and Child in Glory, Arezzo.
- [ag] The Agony in the Garden.
- [ah] Adam and Eve.
- [ai] Martyrdom of St. Peter, Modena.
- [aj] Creation of the Earth.
- [ak] The Madonna giving her Girdle to St. Thomas, Prato.
- [al] The Magdalene and Saints.
- [am] Adoration of the Shepherds, Ravenna Academy.
- [an] The Deity with SS. Catherine and Magdalene.
- [ao] Assumption of the Virgin.
- [ap] Assumption of the Virgin, Venice.
- [aq] The Deity and Christ, Weimar.
- [ar] Assumption of the Virgin at Dusseldorf, Augsburg, Brussels, and Vienna.
- [as] Madonna and Child in Glory, Berlin.
- [at] The Ascension, Munich.
- [au] The Magdalene and Saints, Milan.
- [av] Assumption of the Virgin, Venice.
- [aw] Coronation of the Virgin, Madrid.
- [ax] Ascension of Christ, Vienna.
- [ay] Vision of the Resurrection.
- [az] The Virgin giving her Girdle to St. Thomas, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
- [ba] Let there be Light.
- [bb] "They shall bear thee up."
- [bc] Munich Gallery.
- [bd] Assumption of the Virgin, and Vision of St. Paul.
- [be] Assumption of the Virgin.
- [bf] Bouguereau's Une Ame au Ciel.
- [bg] The Academy, Venice.
- [bh] Assumption of the Virgin, Munich.
- [bi] Madonna and Child with Saints, Parma.
- [bj] The Luxembourg.

- [bk] David plans a Temple.
- [bl] Birth of Venus.
- [bm] Altdorfer's Nativity at Berlin.
- [bn] God's Promise to Abraham.
- [bo] God Appearing to Moses.
- [bp] National Gallery, London.
- [bq] Denner Collection. See Plate 25.
- [br] Brooklyn Museum, New York.
- [bs] The Berlin example of the Embarkation for Cythera.
- [bt] Ducal Palace, Venice.
- [bu] Tate Gallery, London.
- [bv] Schack Gallery, Munich.
- [bw] Adoration of the Shepherds, San Martino, Naples.
- [bx] Design for the Petit Palais, Paris.

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NOTES

NOTE 1. PAGE 2

It is usual and proper to distinguish three kinds of beauty in painting, namely, of colour, of form, and of expression. But form must be defined by tones, and colour without form is meaningless: hence in the general consideration of the painter's art, it is convenient to place form and colour together as representing the sensorial element of beauty. Nevertheless colour and form are not on the same plane in regard to sense perception. Harmony of colour is distinguished involuntarily by nerve sensations, but in the case of harmony of form there must be a certain consideration before its æsthetic determination. The recognition of this harmony commonly appears to be instantaneous, but still it is delayed, the delay varying with the complexity of the signs, that is to say, with the quality of the beauty.

NOTE 2. PAGE 2

Benedetto Croce, the inventor of the latest serious æsthetic system, talks of the "science of art," but he says^[a]:

Science—true science, is a science of the spirit—Philosophy. Natural sciences spoken of apart from philosophy, are complexes of knowledge, arbitrarily abstracted and fixed.

It is perhaps needless to say that Croce's æsthetic system, like all the others, collapses on a breath of inquiry. On the purely philosophical side of it, further criticism is unnecessary, and its practical outcome from the point of view of art is not far removed from the amazing conclusions of Hegel. From the latter philosopher we learn that an idol in the form of a stone pillar, or an animal set up by the primitive races, is higher art than a drama by Shakespeare, or a portrait by Titian, because it represents the Idea (Hegel's unintelligible abstraction—see Note 5), while Croce tells us that "the art of savages is not inferior, as art, to that of civilized peoples, provided it be correlated to the impressions of the savages." Clearly if this be so, we are not surprised to learn from Croce that Aristotle "failed to discern the true nature of the æsthetic." Nevertheless, whatever be the outcome of Croce's arguments, his system is at least more plausible than that of either Hegel or Schopenhauer, for while these two invent highly improbable abstractions upon which to base their systems, Croce only gives new functions to an old and reasonable abstraction.

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[a] *Æsthetic*, Douglas Ainslie Translation, 1909.

NOTE 3. PAGE 3

The writer does not mean to suggest that these systems are set up for the purpose of being knocked down: he desires only to indicate surprise that in new works dealing with the perception of beauty, it is considered necessary to restate the old æsthetic theories and to point out their drawbacks, albeit the fatal objections to them are so numerous that there is always fresh ground available for destructive criticism. The best of the recent works on the subject that have come under the notice of the writer, is E. F. Carritt's review of the present position in respect of æsthetic systems. Though profound, he is so comprehensive that he leaves little or nothing of importance for succeeding critics to say till the next system is put forward. Yet here is his conclusion^[a]:

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If any point can be thought to have emerged from the foregoing considerations, it is this: that in the history of æsthetics we may discover a growing pressure of emphasis upon the doctrine that all beauty is the expression of what may be

generally called emotion, and that all such expression is beautiful.

This is all that an acute investigator can draw from the sum of the æsthetic systems advanced. Now what does this mean? Let us turn to the last page of Carritt's book and find the object of the search after a satisfactory æsthetic system. It is, he says, "the desire to understand goodness and beauty and their relations with each other or with knowledge, as well as to practise or enjoy them." If we accept beauty as the expression of emotion, how far have we progressed towards the indicated goal? Not a step, for we have only agreed upon a new way of stating an obvious condition which applies to the animal world as well as to human beings. Beyond this there is nothing—not a glimpse of sunshine from all the æsthetic systems laid down since the time of Baumgarten.

More than twenty years ago Leo Tolstoy pointed out the unintelligible character of these systems, but no further light has been thrown upon them. Nevertheless Tolstoy's own interpretation of the significance of beauty cannot possibly meet with general approval. He disputes that art is directly associated with beauty or pleasure, and finds in fact that what we call the beautiful representation of nature is not necessarily art, but that^[b]

Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are affected by these feelings, and also experience them.

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This definition may mean almost anything, and particularly it may imply pure imitation which Tolstoy condemns as outside of art. But it certainly does not include many forms of what we call art, the author specially condemning for instance, *Romeo and Juliet*, and declaring that while *Faust* is beautiful, "it cannot produce a really artistic impression." The definition then seems to represent little more than a quibble over terms. Tolstoy says that the beautiful representation of nature is not art, but something else is. Very well then, all we have to do is to find a new term for this representation of nature, and the position remains as before except that the meaning of the term "art" has been changed.

[a] *The Theory of Beauty*, 1914.

[b] *What is Art?* Aylmer Maude Translation.

PLATE 24
PLATE 24



The Creation of Adam, by Michelangelo
(Vatican)

(See page 260)

The Creation of Adam, by Michelangelo
(Vatican)

(See [page 260](#))

[NOTE 4. PAGE 8](#)

The evolutionary principle has been applied to art by Herbert Spencer and J. A. Symonds, but not in the sense in which it is used in connection with the development of living organisms. Spencer traces a progression from the simple to the complex in the application of the arts, but not in the arts themselves^[a];

and Symonds endeavours to prove that each separate marked period of art shows a progression which is common to all; that is, from immature variations to a high type, then downwards through a lower form represented by romanticism or elegance, to realism, and from this to hybrid forms.^[b] Spencer's argument is suggestive, but his conclusions have been mostly upset by archaeological discoveries made since his great book was published. The illustrations given by Symonds are highly illuminating, but they are very far from postulating a general law of evolution operating in the production of art.

[a] *First Principles.*

[b] *Essay on Evolutionary Principles.*

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NOTE 5. PAGE 8

It seems necessary to mention Hegel's art periods, though one can only do so with a feeling of regret that a man who achieved a high reputation as a philosopher should have entered the province of art only to misconstrue its purpose with fantastic propositions which have no historical or other apparent foundation. He divides art history into Symbolic, Classic, and Romantic periods respectively. To accomplish this he invents or discovers a new abstraction which he calls the Idea, this representing man's conception, not of God, but of His perfection—His supreme qualities, so that in one sense the Idea may be called the Absolute, in another the Spirit, and in another, Truth. These terms are in fact interchangeable, and each may be a manifestation of another, or of God. This Idea, he says, being perfect beauty, is the basic concept of art. In archaic times man was unable to give expression to this concept, so he represented it by symbols: hence the earliest art was Symbolic art. In the time of the Greeks man had so advanced that he was able to give higher expression to the Idea, and he embodied it in a perfect human form. This is the Classic period, which Hegel indicates continued till Christianity spread abroad, when Classic form, though perfect as art, was found insufficient for the now desired still higher expression of the Idea. This expression could not be put into stone, so other arts than sculpture were used for it, namely, poetry, painting, and music, which are placed together as Romantic art. This is as nearly as possible a statement of the periods of Hegel in short compass. It is impossible to interpret logically his arguments, nor is it necessary, for his conclusions when tested in the light of experience, develop into inexplicable paradoxes and contradictions which border on the ridiculous. Needless to say, the acceptance of this division means the annihilation of our ideas of the meaning of art, and the condemnation to the limbo of forgetfulness of nearly all the artists whose memory is honoured.

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The general interpretation of the terms "Classic Art" and "Romantic Art" widely differs from that of Hegel, and varies with the arts. In the literary arts the distinction is obvious, but the terms are used to define both periods and classes; in architecture the Gothic period is usually called the Romantic epoch; and in painting the terms have reference to manner, the more formal manner being called Classic, and the soft manner, Romantic; though it is commonly understood that Romantic art is especially concerned with subjects associated with the gentler side of life. But there is no general agreement. Some writers assert that Giorgione was the first of the romanticists, others give the palm to Watteau, a third section to Delacroix, and a fourth to the Barbizon School. We must await a clear definition of "Romantic Art."

NOTE 6. PAGE 8

It may be reasonably argued that the want of development of the plastic arts in England during the literary revival, was largely due to artificial restrictions. Fine paintings were ordered out of the churches by Elizabeth, and many were destroyed; while, following the lead of the court, there was little or no encouragement offered by the public to artists except perhaps in portraiture. Flaxman truly said of the destruction of works of art in this period, that the check to the national art in England occurred at a time which offered the most essential and extraordinary assistance to its progress.

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NOTE 7. PAGE 16

During the last half century or so, various writers of repute, including Ruskin and Dean Farrar, have professed to find in the poorer works of the Italian painters of the fourteenth century, and even in paintings of Margaritone and others of the previous century, evidence of strong religious emotion on the part of the artists. It is claimed that their purpose in giving simple solemn faces to their Madonnas and Saints, was "to tell the sacred story in all its beauty and simplicity"; that they possessed a "powerful sincerity of emotion"; that they "delivered the burning messages of prophecy with the stammering lips of infancy," and so on. It is proper to say that there is nothing to support this view of the early painters. We find no trace of any suggestions of the kind till the last of these artists had been dead for about four hundred years, while their lives, so far as we have any record, lend no warranty to the statements. The painters of the fourteenth century took their art seriously, but purely as a craft, and it was not uncommon with them to combine two or three other crafts with that of painting. They designed mostly sacred subjects for the simple reason that the art patrons of the day seldom ordered anything else. In their private lives they associated together, were generally agreeable companions, and not averse to an occasional escapade. Moreover the time in which they lived was notable for what we should call loose habits, and indeed from the thirteenth century to the end of the fifteenth, religious observances and practices were of a more hollow and formal character than they have ever been since.

The position occupied by these painters in the progression of art from the crude Byzantine period upwards, corresponds with that of the Roman painters of the third and fourth centuries in the progression downwards to the Byzantine epoch, and there is no more reason for supposing that the Italians were actuated by special emotions in their work, than that the Romans were so moved. In both cases the character of the work, as Reynolds put it in referring to the Italians, was the result of want of knowledge. The countenances usually presented by both Roman and Italian artists have a half sad, half resigned expression, because this was the only kind of expression that could be given by an immature painter whose ideal was restricted by the

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necessity of eliminating elements which might indicate happiness. Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, Duccio, and a few more, were exceptions in that their art was infinitely superior to the average of the century, but all from Giotto downwards, laboured as craftsmen only. No doubt they often worked with enthusiasm, and in this way their emotions may have been brought into play, but there is no possible means of identifying in a picture the emotions which an artist may have experienced while he was painting it.

As to the sad expression referred to in these Italian works, it may be observed that Edgar A. Poe held that the tone of the highest manifestation of beauty is one of sadness. "Beauty of whatever kind," he says, "in its supreme development invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears."^[a] But Poe is clearly mistaken here. It is not the beauty of the work that affects the emotions to tears, when they are so affected, but the subject of the design exhibiting the beauty. A picture or poem representing a sad subject may be very beautiful, but the sadness itself would not assist the beauty, though it might increase the emotional effect. The higher forms of beauty rarely draw our tears, but elicit our admiration without direct thought of anything but the beauty. Who would weep when in front of the greatest marvels of Greek sculpture?

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[a] *The Philosophy of Composition.*

NOTE 8. PAGE 21

It is commonly, but wrongfully, supposed that Rembrandt used his broadest manner in painting commissioned portraits. The number of his portraits known to exist is about 450, of which fifty-five are representations of himself, and fifty-four of members of his household, or relatives. There are, further, more than seventy studies of old men and women, and thirty of younger men. The balance are commissioned portraits or groups. This last section includes none at all of his palette knife pictures, and not more than two or three which are executed with his heaviest brushes. Generally his work broadened in his later period, but up to the end of his life his more important works were often painted in a comparatively fine manner, though the handling was less careful and close.^[a] The broadest style of the artist is rarely exhibited except in his studies and family portraits. Further it is extremely unlikely that a palette-knife picture would have been accepted in Holland during Rembrandt's time as a serious work in portraiture.

[a] See among works dating after 1660, *The Syndics of the Drapers, Portrait of a Young Man, Wachtmeister Collection; Lady with a Dog, Colmar Museum; and Portrait of a Young Man, late Beit Collection.*

NOTE 9. PAGE 22

Darwin pointed out the permanent character of the changes in the nerves, though he submitted another demonstration^[a]:

That some physical change is produced in the nerve cells or nerves which are habitually used can hardly be doubted, for otherwise it is impossible to understand how the tendency to certain acquired movements is inherited.

[a] *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals.*

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NOTE 10. PAGE 23

Reynolds evidently had little faith in original genius. Addressing Royal Academy students, he said^[a]:

You must have no dependence on your own genius. If you have great talents, industry will improve them; if you have but moderate abilities, industry will supply the deficiency. Nothing is denied to well-directed labour; nothing is to be obtained without it.... I will venture to assert that assiduity unabated by difficulty, and a disposition eagerly directed to the object of its pursuit, will produce effects similar to those which some call the result of natural powers.

On another occasion Reynolds observed of Michelangelo^[b]:

He appears not to have had the least conception that his art was to be acquired by any other means than great labour; and yet he of all men that ever lived, might make the greatest pretensions to the efficacy of native genius and inspiration.

Gibbon said that Reynolds agreed with Dr. Johnson in denying all original genius, any natural propensity of the mind to one art or science rather than another.^[c] Hogarth also agreed with Reynolds, for he describes genius as "nothing but labour and diligence."

Croce says that genius has a quantitative and not a qualitative signification, but he offers no demonstration.^[d] Evidently he is mistaken, for the signification is both quantitative and qualitative. It is true that what a Phidias, or a Raphael, or a Beethoven puts together is a sum of small beauties, any one of which may be equalled by another man, but he does more than represent a number of beauties, for he combines these into a beautiful whole which is superior in quality and cannot be estimated quantitatively. We may possibly call Darwin a genius because of the large number of facts he ascertained, and the correct inferences he drew from them, but we particularly apply the term to him by reason of the general result of all these facts and inferences, this result being qualitative and not quantitative. Croce probably took his dictum from Schopenhauer, who, however, represented degrees of quality as quantitative,^[e] which is of course confusing the issue.

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[a] Reynolds's Second Discourse.

[b] His Fifth Discourse.

[c] Gibbon's *Memoirs of my Life and Writings.*

[d] *Æsthetic.*

NOTE 11. PAGE 32

It is often observed by advocates of "new" forms of art that the work of many great artists has been variously valued at different periods—that leaders of marked departures in art now honoured, were frequently more or less ignored in their own time, while other artists who acquired a great reputation when living, have been properly put into the background by succeeding generations. For the first statement no solid ground can be shown. In painting, the artists since the Dark Age who can be said to have led departures of any importance, are Cimabue, Giotto, the Van Eycks, Masaccio, Lionardo, Dürer, Giorgione, Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian, Holbein, Claude, Rubens, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Watteau, Reynolds, and Fragonard. All of these had their high talents recognized and thoroughly appreciated in their lifetime. In sculpture the experience is the same, for there is no sculptor now honoured whose work was not highly valued by his contemporaries. So with poetry, but before the invention of printing and in the earlier days of this industry, poetry of any kind was very slow in finding its way among the people. What might seem nowadays to have been inappreciation of certain poets was really want of knowledge of them.

There is more truth in the assertion that many artists who had a high reputation in their lifetime are now more or less disregarded, though it does not follow from this that there has been a reversal of opinion on the part of the public, or a variation in the acuteness of æsthetic perception. Generally we find that these artists very properly held the position they occupied in their time and country, and if they do not now stand on exalted pedestals it is only because we compare them with men of other periods and places, which their contemporary countrymen did not do, at least for the purpose of establishing their permanent position in art. Carlo Maratta for instance was celebrated in Italy as the best painter of his country in his time, and even now we must so regard him, but his contemporaries as with ourselves did not place him on so high a level as his great predecessors of the sixteenth century, and some of the seventeenth. A special reason why many of the seventeenth century artists of Italy have fallen in public esteem may be found in the fact that they excelled mostly in the production of sensorial beauty, paying little attention to intellectual grace, and the ripening of general intelligence as time goes on makes us more and more sensitive to beauty of mind.

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NOTE 12. PAGE 34

There have been many definitions of "Impressionism" given, but they vary considerably. Professor Clausen describes it as the work of a number of artists whose interest is in recording effects of light, seeking to express nature only and disregarding old conventions.^[a] Mr. D. S. MacColl says that an impressionist is^[b]

a painter who, out of the completed contacts of vision constructs an image moulded upon his own interest in the thing seen, and not on that of any imaginary schoolmaster.

This definition is insufficient by itself, but the writer makes his meaning clearer in the same article when he says:

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Impressionism is the art that surveys the field, and determines which of the shapes and tones are of chief importance to the interested eye, and expresses these and sacrifices the rest.

According to C. Mauclair, an acknowledged authority on impressionism, the impressionist holds:

Light becomes the one subject of a picture. The interest of the objects on which it shines is secondary. Painting thus understood becomes an art of pure optics, a seeking for harmonies, a species of natural poem, entirely distinct from expression, style, drawing, which have formed the main endeavour of preceding painting. It is almost necessary to invent a new word for this special art, which, while remaining throughout pictorial, approaches music in the same degree as it departs from literature or psychology.^[c]

What can be said of so amazing a declaration? The arts of painting and music do not, and cannot, have any connection with each other. They are concerned with different senses and different signs, and by no stretch of the imagination can they be combined. Seeing that musical terms when used in respect of painting by modern critics are almost invariably made to apply to colour harmonies, we may infer that a confusion of thought arises in the minds of the writers from the similar physical means by which colour and sound are conveyed to the senses concerned. But this similarity has nothing to do with the appreciation of art. The æsthetic value of a work is determined when it is conveyed to the mind, irrespective of the means by which it is so conveyed.

According to La Touche it was Fantin Latour who invented modern impressionism. Braquemond relates that La Touche told him the following story.^[d] He (La Touche) was one day at the Louvre with Manet, when they saw Latour copying Paolo Veronese's Marriage at Cana in a novel manner, for instead of blending his colours in the usual way, he laid them on in small touches of separate tones. The result was an unexpected brilliancy ("papillotage imprevu") which amazed but charmed the visitors. Nevertheless when Manet left the Louvre with La Touche, he appeared anything but satisfied with what he had seen, and pronounced it humbug. But Latour's method evidently sunk into his mind, for a few days later he commenced to use it himself. Thus, added La Touche, was modern impressionism unchained. The date of this visit was not given by La Touche, but 1874 was subsequently suggested. This account does not fit in with the statement of MacColl that when Monet and Pissarro were in London during the siege of Paris, the study of Turner's pictures gave them the suggestion of these broken patches of colour.^[e] If this be true Monet must have antedated Manet in the application of isolated tones.

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D. S. Eaton asserts that in the Salon of 1867, there was exhibited a picture by Monet which was entitled Impressions,^[f] and from this arose the word "Impressionist"; but Phythian says that the word resulted from Monet's "Impression, soleil levant," exhibited in 1874 at the Nadar Gallery in Paris with other works from Le Société Anonyme des Artistes, Peintres, Sculpteurs, et Graveurs. Phythian adds^[g]:

Thus, unwittingly led by one of the exhibitors, visitors to the exhibition came to use the word "impressioniste," and within a few days a contemptuously unfavourable notice of the exhibition appeared in *Le Charivari* under the heading "Exposition des Impressionistes." It was not until the lapse of several years that the name came into general use. The painters to whom

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it was applied disowned it because it was used in a depreciatory sense. Eventually however, unable to find a better one, they adopted it.

Another origin of Impressionism is given by Muther. He says^[h]:

The name "Impressionists" dates from an exhibition in Paris which was given at Nadar's in 1871. The catalogue contained a great deal about impressions—for instance, "Impression de mon pot au feu," "Impression d'un chat qui se promene." In his criticism Claretie summed up the impressions, and spoke of the Salon des Impressionistes.

But the real origin of impressionism must be sought earlier than 1871, for in 1865 Manet exhibited his Olympia in the Salon des Refusés. This picture did not represent what was understood as impressionism ten years later, but it led the way towards the establishment of the innovation, in that it pretended that healthy ideas and noble designs were secondary considerations in art. Certainly Manet could not descend lower than this wretched picture, and in this sense his subsequent work was a distinct advance.

[a] Royal Academy Lectures.

[b] Article on "Impressionism," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th Edition.

[c] *L'Impressionism, son histoire, son esthétique, ses maîtres*.

[d] *Le Journal des Arts*, 1909.

[e] Article on "Impressionism," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition.

[f] *Handbook of Modern French Painting*.

[g] *Fifty Years of Modern Painting*.

[h] *History of Modern Painting*, vol. iii.

NOTE 13. PAGE 35

The reason given by impressionists for the juxtaposition of pure colours is that the natural blend produced is more brilliant than the tone from the mixed colours applied, but it is pointed out by Moreau-Vauthier that the contrary is the case. He says^[a]:

We find in practice that the parent colours do not, with material colours, produce the theoretical binaries. We get dark, dull greens, oranges, and violets, that clash with the parent colours. To make them harmonize we should be obliged to dim these material colours, to transform them, and consequently to lose them partly.

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[a] *The Technique of Painting*, 1912.

PLATE 25



The Pleiads, by M. Schwind

(See page 269)

The Pleiads, by M. Schwind(See [page 269](#))**NOTE 14. PAGE 37**

Cézanne and Van Gogh are not usually put forward as representative impressionists, but it is impossible to differentiate logically between the various "isms" of which impressionism is the mother, and to attempt a serious argument upon them would be apt to reflect upon the common sense of the reader. The sincere impressionist certainly produces a thing of beauty, however ephemeral and lacking in high character the beauty may be, but most of the productions of the other "isms" only serve the purpose of degrading the artist and the art.

NOTE 15. PAGE 40

This form of picture is by no means new, though except among the inventors of sprezzatura, and the modern impressionists, it has always been executed as a rough sketch for the purpose of settling harmonies for serious work. Lomazzo relates that Aurelio, son of Bernadino Luini, while visiting Titian, asked him how he managed to make his landscape tones harmonize so well. For reply the great master showed Aurelio a large sketch, the character of which could not be distinguished when it was closely inspected, but on the observer stepping back, a landscape appeared "as if it had suddenly been lit up by a ray of the sun."^[a] From Luini's surprise, and inasmuch as we have no record of similar work before his time, it is reasonable to suppose that Titian was the first great artist to use this form of sketch for experimental purposes.

[a] *Trattato dell' Arte de la Pittura.*

NOTE 16. PAGE 40

The example of this picture at the Pitti Palace is specially noted because it seems impossible that the duplicate in the Uffizi Gallery can be by Raphael, for it has obvious defects, some of which have many times

been pointed out. The expression is vastly inferior to that in the Pitti portrait, for instead of a calm, noble, benign countenance, we have a half-worried senile face which is anything but pleasant. Raphael was the last man to execute a portrait of a Pope without generalizing high character in the features. It will be observed also that in the Uffizi portrait, the left hand is stiff and cramped, and the drapery ungracefully flowing, while both uprights of the chair are actually out of drawing. There are other examples of the same picture in different museums, but the Pitti work is far above these in every respect, and seems the only one which can be properly attributed to the master. Passavant affirms that some of the repetitions of the work were certainly made in the studio of Raphael under his orders, and thinks that the duplicates passed for originals even in his time.^[a]

[a] *Raphael d'Urbino*, vol. ii.

NOTE 17. PAGE 41

To the knowledge of the writer, the only logical connection between the work of Rembrandt and impressionism that has been suggested, is from the pen of Professor Baldwin Brown, who remarks^[a]:

Rembrandt in his later work attended to the pictorial effect alone, and practically annulled the objects by reducing them to pure tone and colour. Things are not there at all, but only the semblance, or effect, or impression of things. Breadth is in this way combined with the most delicate variety, and a new form of painting, now called "impressionism" has come into being.

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The professor is mistaken here. During the last fifteen years of his life, apart from portraits, a few studies of heads, and some colour experiments with carcasses of meat, Rembrandt executed, so far as is known, about three dozen pictures, and in all of these he effectually prevents us from forming a general impression of the designs before considering the more important details, by concentrating nearly all the available light upon the countenances of the principal personages represented; while in the management of the features, the whole purpose of the chiaroscuro is for the purpose of obtaining relief. Moreover the pictures are nearly all groups of personages in set subjects, and there would be no meaning in the designs if the objects were "practically annulled," for particular action and expression are necessary for their comprehension.

As to Velasquez there is no evidence tending to support the statement that he was an impressionist. The first authority on the artist has definitely pointed out that he never took up his brushes except for an important and definite work: "he neither painted impressions nor daubs."^[b]

[a] Article on "Painting," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition.

[b] *Velasquez*, by De Beruete, 1902.

NOTE 18. PAGE 49

It will always be a matter of surprise that so much popularity was secured by the light sketches of the Barbizon School, considering their general insignificance from the point of view of art, and the conspicuously artificial means adopted for their exploitation. Some of the artists of this school, having accomplished many studio works of merit, acquired the habit of painting in the open air. By this method it is impossible to execute a comprehensive natural scene, and the painters did not attempt the task, but they produced numberless sketchy works of local scenes under particular atmospheric conditions. They laboured honestly and conscientiously, and their sketches were put out for what they were and nothing more. The paintings would probably have retained their place as simple studies had not some commercial genius conceived the idea of putting them into heavy, gorgeous, gilt frames. With this embellishment they were successfully scattered round the world, mostly in the newer portions, much to the general astonishment. The *raison d'être* of the frames puzzled many persons, though it was frequently observed that the pictures do not look well unless surrounded by ample gold leaf. Thus, C. J. Holmes, Director of the London National Gallery, and an authority on impressionism, notes^[a]:

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Barbizon pictures are almost invariably set in frames with an undeniably vulgar look. Yet in such a rectangle of gilded contortion a Corot or a Daubigny shows to perfection: place it in a frame of more reticent design, and it becomes in a moment flat, empty, and tame.

The purpose of this frame is obvious. The eye is caught by the dazzling glitter, and feels immediate relief when it rests upon the quiet grey tone of the painting, the pleasurable sensation resulting therefrom being mistaken for involuntary appreciation of the beauty of the work.

As finished paintings these Barbizon sketches are novel, but as studies they are not, for similar work has been executed for two or three centuries, and particularly by the Dutch artists of the seventeenth century. In every considerable collection of drawings such sketches may be found, and there is scarcely a Barbizon painter whose work was not anticipated by a Dutch master. One has only to examine the drawings in the public art institutions of Europe by De Molyn, Blyhooff, Jan de Bischoop, Lambert Doomer, Berghem, Avercamp, and others, to find examples which, if executed now, might easily be taken for works by the Barbizon masters.

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[a] *Notes on the Science of Picture-Making*.

NOTE 19. PAGE 52

In recent times attempts have been made to upset the dictum of Aristotle as to the imitative character of the arts generally, exception being taken in respect of music and architecture. The first objection as to music arose with Schopenhauer, though he does not appear to have been quite certain of his position. He stated that while the other arts represent ideas, music does not, but being an art it must represent something, and he

suggested that this something is the "Will," the term being used in the Schopenhauer philosophical sense, that is to say, implying the active principle of the universe, not being God. This means nothing at all from the point of view of art, and cannot even be seriously considered. The most notable essay on the subject since Schopenhauer is from the pen of Sidney Colvin who places music and architecture in a non-imitative group by themselves, the former on the principal ground that "it is like nothing else; it is no representation or similitude of anything whatever"; while architecture, he says, "appeals to our faculties for taking pleasure in non-imitative combinations of stationary masses."^[a] But what Aristotle meant is that the arts are imitative in character, and not that they necessarily attempt to produce works of similitude with nature, this being evident from the fact that he pointed out that the higher works of art surpass nature, and he divided poetry and painting into three sections, of which the first is better than life, and the third inferior to it.

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The musician in producing his art proceeds in precisely the same way as the poet or painter. He takes natural signs and rearranges them in a new order, producing a combination which is not to be found complete in nature, but every sign therein is natural and must necessarily be so. The higher the flight of the poet, or musician, or painter, or sculptor, the farther is the result from nature, but nevertheless the whole aim of the musician, as of the poet, is to represent emotional effects or natural phenomena beyond experience in life, as the great sculptor represents form and expression, and the great poet besides these things, every abstract quality, passion, and emotional effect, above this experience; but he cannot do more; he cannot represent something outside of nature, and so must imitate, that is, in the sense of representation.

Darwin notes that even a perfect musical scale can be found in nature. He says^[b]:

It is a remarkable fact that an ape, a species of the gibbon family, produces an exact octave of musical sounds, ascending and descending the scale by half tones. From this fact, and from the analogy of other animals, I have been led to infer that the progenitors of man probably uttered musical tones, and that consequently, when the voice is used under any strong emotion, it tends to assume, through the principle of association, a musical character.

It has been further demonstrated that the strength of the sensory impressions from certain sounds is due to the structure of the ear, and that generally a particular kind of sound produces a similar kind of emotional effect in animals as in man. Obviously the musician is powerless to do more than widen or deepen this effect. Colvin admits that the musician sometimes directly imitates, as when he produces the notes of birds or the sounds of natural forces, or when he represents particular emotions; but he regards the former instances as hazardous and exceptional, and indicates that a particular emotional harmony may affect the hearers differently. True, but the hazard of the first condition is the result of the limitations of the artist, and the second condition is the consequence of the limitations of the art. The effect of music being purely sensorial must vary with the emotional conditions surrounding the hearer. The musician does what he can, but he is unable to go so far as the poet and produce an emotional effect which will with certainty be recognized by every person affected, at all times, as having the same particular bearing.

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Taine separates music ("properly so called" as distinguished from dramatic music) and architecture from the imitative arts, as they "combine mathematical relationships so as to create works that do not correspond with real objects."^[c] Obviously the whole purpose of dramatic music is to imitate the effects of the passions, but its necessary inclusion amongst the imitative arts upsets the dictum of Taine, for the emotional effects of one kind of music only differ from those of another kind when they differ at all, in the character of the natural emotional effects represented.

In the case of the architect, seeing that his art is subordinated to utility, his scheme, his measurements, and the character of his materials, are largely or almost entirely governed by conditions outside of his art, and consequently it is only possible for him to represent nature to a limited extent. Rarely can he vaguely suggest a natural aisle beneath the celestial dome, a rock-walled cave whose roof soars into obscurity, or a fairy grotto backed by a beetling cliff. Sometimes he may cause us to experience similar effects in kind to those we feel when we recognize grandeur in nature, but usually he is compelled to confine his beauty to harmonies produced by symmetrical designs of straight lines and curves. But in his simplest as in his most complex designs, he must follow nature as closely as possible. Purely ornamental forms always appear more beautiful when the parts have a direct mathematical relationship with each other than when they have not; that is to say, when the parts appear to be naturally related. Thus, that a cross appears to be less agreeable to the sight when the horizontal bar is below the centre of the perpendicular than when it is above this point, is due to what appears to be a want of balance because the form is unobservable in nature. In trees the horizontal parts are usually above the middle of the height of the observable trunk, and in the exceptions nature gives the whole tree a conical or other shape, the relative position of the horizontal parts being obscured in the general form.

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As with parts of forms, so with the forms as wholes. Other things being equal, that design is the best where the forms are directly proportioned one with the other and with the whole, and this is because we are accustomed to the order of design in nature where everything is balanced by means of direct proportions and corresponding relations. The architect therefore, like the musician or poet, must represent nature so far as he can within the limits of his art, though his representation is comparatively weak owing to the artificial restrictions imposed upon him.

[a] Article on "Fine Arts," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th Edition.

[b] *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.

[c] *On the Ideal in Art*.

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NOTE 20. PAGE 54

The dictum of Aristotle in reference to metre in poetry related only to epic and dramatic verse, for what we understand as lyric poetry was separated by the Greeks as song in which of course metre is compulsory. It is doubtful whether a single definition can cover both epic poetry, whose beauty lies almost wholly in the substance, and lyric verse where the beauty rests chiefly in qualities of expression and musical form, and in which indeed the substance may be altogether negligible. A cursory examination of Watts-Dunton's definition of "Poetry," which is admittedly the best put forward in recent times, shows its entire inadequacy. "Absolute poetry," he says, "is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language."^[a] This would exclude from the art some of the finest sacred verse, which, though in the form of

prose, has been recognized as poetry from time immemorial. Metre is only one of the devices of the poet for accomplishing his end—the presentation of beautiful pictures upon the mind, but in high poetry there is a still more compulsory artifice which is not included in Watts-Dunton's definition, and that is metaphor. In the form of words the details of a picture can only be dealt with successively, and not simultaneously, and without metaphor the poet would sometimes be in the position of the painter who should present a dozen different pictures each containing only one part of a composition, and call upon the observer to put the pieces together in his mind. Further the term "absolute" in the definition quoted has no comprehensible meaning if it does not exclude a good deal of verse which is commonly recognized as poetry, while, as is admitted by Watts-Dunton, there is much accepted lyric verse without concrete expression.

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In high poetry as in high painting, the beauty appeals both to the senses and the mind, and in each art the quality descends as the sensorial overbalances the intellectual appeal, and the effect becomes more ephemeral. In the very highest of the plastic arts, colour has little value except in assisting definition; and in the very highest poetry musical form has only an emphasizing value, for the sensorial beauty arising from form in the one case, and form and action in the other, entirely overpowers the harmonies of colour and tone respectively. But colour without design is meaningless, so that it cannot be applied in the fine arts apart from design: hence in painting, colour presents no complication in respect of definition. On the other hand music, with or without association with poetry, is equally an art since in either case it imitates the effects of human emotions in a beautiful way. Thus, where metre is present poetry is a combined art, and seeing that metre may not be present, a definition of "Poetry" must cover what may be in one case a pure, and in another, a compound art.

[a] Article on "Poetry," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition.

NOTE 21. PAGE 55

There seems to be a tendency to overestimate the disparity between translations of high poetry and the originals. The value of a translation depends primarily upon the character of the thing translated, since it is the form that is unreproducible in another tongue, and not the substance. In epic and dramatic poetry where the form is of secondary importance, a good literal translation may come much nearer to the original than a translation of a lyric where the form is usually of at least equal importance with the substance. We lose less of Homer or Sophocles than of Sappho or Theocritus in translation. In the case of epic poetry the higher its character, the closer to the original appears the translation, because the form is of less relative importance. More of Dante is lost than of Homer in literal translation, but the difference narrows when the new versions are in metrical form, for the use of metre in translation is necessarily more detrimental as the substance of the original increases in power, and this relative weakening is emphasized as the beauty of form in the translation is raised. Pope is farther from Homer than Chapman, and Chapman than the prose translations of Buckley and Lang. As we descend in the scale of the art, so it becomes more difficult to reproduce the poet in translation, and in most lyric poetry the beauty seems almost entirely lost in another tongue from the original, though when the substance is of weight, and the translator is himself a good poet, he sometimes gives us a paraphrase with a high beauty of its own. Some modern poets seem to eschew substance altogether. Much of the verse of esteemed French and Belgian poets is quite meaningless in literal translation, the authors relying for the effects entirely upon musical form and beauty of expression.

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NOTE 22. PAGE 66

Lessing points out this remarkable picture of Homer as emphasizing the beauty of Helen, observing:

What could produce a more vivid idea of beauty than making old age confess that it is well worth while the war which cost so much blood, and so much treasure?

Nevertheless the remark of the old men does not seem to mean so much as the description of the sages and their reference to the goddesses. It is difficult to imagine several wise men agreeing that the sanguinary war of nine years was really excusable in view of Helen's beauty, and the statement therefore is naturally received as a permissible overcolour. Consequently the effect of the remark would be discounted, and unlikely to be sufficient for the purpose of the poet. True, the Greeks seem to have been childlike sometimes in their simplicity, but there is no evidence that they were so wanting in a sense of proportion as to accept literally this opinion of the elders. But when we observe the senility of the elders, and the physical feebleness which has apparently rendered them incapable of sensual pleasures, then indeed we must marvel at a beauty which excites their emotions so powerfully as to bring the goddesses to their minds.^[a]

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In discussing the suitability of this incident as a subject for a painting, Lessing remarks that the passion felt by the old men was "a momentary spark which their wisdom at once extinguished," but later on, referring to the possibility that the veil worn by Helen when she passed through the streets of Troy had not been removed when she was seen by the elders, he points out^[b]:

When the elders displayed their admiration for her, it must not be forgotten that they were not seeing her for the first time. Their confession therefore did not necessarily arise from the present momentary view of her, for they had doubtless often experienced before the feelings which they now for the first time acknowledged.

This is very true, but it only serves to deepen the impression of Helen's beauty, for the element of surprise is removed from the minds of the elders, the mere sight of her, veiled or unveiled, being sufficient to recall the passionate thrills previously experienced.

[a] See on this subject Quintilian, viii., 4.

[b] *Laocoon*, Rönnefeldt translation.

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NOTE 23. PAGE 67

In nearly all the instances of sublimity quoted by Longinus there is this particular merit of brevity—the picture is thrown upon the brain immediately, without pause or anything whatever to complicate the beauty. But the learned critic directs attention only to the magnificent thoughts and the appropriate use of them, without pointing out the extraordinary condensation of the language employed. Apart from the instance from Genesis given, there is another of his examples in which practically the whole beauty of the picture is produced by the rapidity of its presentation. This is the exclamation of Hyperides when accused of passing an illegal decree for the liberation of slaves—"It was not an orator that made this decree, but the battle of Chæronea." Longinus observes^[a]:

At the same time that he exhibits proof of his legal proceedings, he intermixes an image of the battle, and by that stroke of art quite passes the bounds of mere persuasion.

But it was rather the manner in which the battle was introduced than the fact of its introduction, that gave force to the argument. If instead of confining himself to a short brilliant observation, Hyperides had carefully traced cause and effect in the matter, he would still have intermixed an image of the battle, but he would not then have produced a work of art.

Still finer instances of the use of brevity in expression by the orator are to be found in the speeches of Demosthenes. For example in his oration On the Crown he says: "Man is not born to his parents only, but to his country." A whole volume on the meaning and virtue of patriotism could not say more: hence the sublime art. The simple statement lights a torch by which we examine every convulsion in history; presents a moving picture in which we see the motives and aspirations guiding the patriots of a hundred generations; sets an eternal seal of nobility upon the love of man for his native country. And a few words suffice. The same thought might be elaborated into a large volume, but the art would fly with the brevity.

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[a] *On the Sublime*, XV., William Smith translation.

NOTE 24. PAGE 68

There are many translations of the Ode to Anactoria, but the best of them reflects only slightly the depth of passion in the original. The version which most nearly represents the substance, while maintaining the unhalting flow of language, is perhaps that of Ambrose Philips (1675-1749), which runs thus:—

Blest as th' immortal gods is he,
The youth who fondly sits by thee,
And hears, and sees thee all the while
Softly speak, and sweetly smile.

'Twas this deprived my soul of rest,
And raised such tumults in my breast;
For while I gazed, in transport tost,
My breath was gone, my voice was lost.

My bosom glowed; the subtle flame
Ran quick through all my vital frame;
O'er my dim eyes a darkness hung;
My ears with hollow murmurs rung.

In dewy damps my limbs were chilled;
My blood with gentle horrors thrilled;
My feeble pulse forgot to play;
I fainted, sunk, and died away.

The English reproductions of this ode in the Sapphic measure are not very successful, the difficulty of course being due to the practical impossibility of fulfilling the quantitative conditions of the strophe without stilted the flow of language, or unduly varying the substance. But it has been shown by Dr. Marion Miller in his translation of Sappho's Hymn to Aphrodite, which is much higher in substance and somewhat less condensed in expression than the Ode to Anactoria, that with certain liberties in respect of quantities, a very beautiful semblance of the Sapphic measure may be produced in English. His translation of this hymn is unquestionably the best in our language, though this is perhaps partly due to the fact that he is almost the only translator who has adhered to the text in regard to the sex of the loved person. To make the object of affection a man seems inappropriate to the language employed in the verse. (It is proper to mention that a license taken by Dr. Miller in his translation—where he renders the passage relating to the sparrows, as "clouding with their pinions, Earth's wide dominions"—suggested to the present writer the somewhat similar picture to be found on Page 111.)

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PLATE 26



St. Margaret, by Raphael
(*Louvre*)

(See page 250)

St. Margaret, by Raphael
(*Louvre*)

(See [page 250](#))

[NOTE 25. PAGE 68](#)

The gradual decadence of the great period of Grecian sculpture is well marked by the successive variations of the Cnidian Aphrodite of Praxiteles. The copy of this at the Vatican is no doubt a close representation of the original, but later there was commenced a long series of variations, all of them more or less complicating the design. First a pillar was substituted for the vase, reaching nearly to the armpits, and the left forearm rested upon it, while drapery fell down the front, so that some exertion was required to separate the figure to the eye. Then a dolphin was substituted for the pillar, the head of the animal resting on the ground, and the body rising up straight with the bent tail forming the support. Then for this was placed a dolphin with its body corkscrew shaped, which was particularly weak as it tended to deprive the figure of repose. After this, while the dolphin was maintained, a cestus was sometimes added, and heavy drapery applied in various folds. Finally the attitude of the figure was changed, that of the Venus de' Medici being adopted, while the pillar or dolphin was retained. Each alteration necessarily diminished the beauty of the figure.

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[NOTE 26. PAGE 69](#)

Reynolds seems to have been disappointed with the frescoes of Raphael when he first saw them, and this fact has been called in evidence by some modern critics to support their contention that the art of the great masters is really inferior to that wherein design is subordinated to colour. But Reynolds very definitely admitted that his first impression was wrong, for after studying the frescoes, he notes^[a]:

In a short time a new taste and a new perception began to dawn upon me, and I was convinced that I had originally formed a false opinion of the perfection of art, and that this great painter was well entitled to the high rank which he holds in the admiration of the world.

Reynolds was quite a young man when he went to Rome, and his appreciation of Raphael increased as his experience matured. More than twenty years after the visit, he remarked that Raphael had "a greater combination of the high qualities of the art than any other man,"^[b] and ten years later he affirmed that the Urbino artist stood foremost among the first painters.^[c] Reynolds supposed that his lack of appreciation of the frescoes when he first saw them arose from want of immediate comprehension of them: he was unaccustomed to works of such great power, but it is to be observed that his inspection was a very short one, and we may reasonably draw the conclusion that changing light conditions had much to do with the effect the paintings left upon him at the time. When one enters a room where the light differs materially in intensity or quality from that experienced just previously, it is advisable to rest quietly for a little while before examining works defined by colour, in order that the eyes may become accustomed to the new light.

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[a] Reynolds's *Italian Note Book*.

[b] His Fifth Discourse at the Royal Academy.

[c] His Twelfth Discourse.

NOTE 27. PAGE 73

That the judgment of the public upon a work of art is final seems to have been recognized by all the ancient writers who dealt with the matter, and that the Greeks generally held this view is evident from many incidents, notably the reference to public judgment in the great competition between Phidias and Alcamenes. During the Renaissance also the opinion held good, and it is worth noting that the suggestion sometimes made that Michelangelo did not conform to this view is unsupported by evidence. Vasari relates the following anecdote^[a]:

He [Michelangelo] went to see a work of sculpture which was about to be sent out because it was finished, and the sculptor was taking much trouble to arrange the lights from the windows to the end that it might show up well; whereupon Michelangelo said to him: "Do not trouble yourself, the important thing will be the light of the piazza"; meaning to infer that when works are in public places, the people must judge whether they are good or bad.

Lionardo went so far as to advise artists to hear any man's opinion on his work, "for," he said, "we know very well that though a man may not be a painter, he has a true conception of the form of another man."^[b] It is a common misconception with the general public, though not among serious artists, that by reason of their profession artists are better judges of works of art than other men. Obviously the recognition of beauty in art is apart altogether from the means by which it is created, and subject to the exceptions noted elsewhere, all men are alike able to appreciate high beauty. Winckelmann even advised his readers against the judgment of artists on the ground that they generally preferred what is difficult to what is beautiful,^[c] but experience with the great art bodies in Europe who hold exhibitions does not support this view. It is only the weaker artists who are liable to be prejudiced in such matters, and when the judges are of high attainments in art, they almost invariably make the same choice in competitions that would be made if general opinion were solicited. But although artists cannot be better judges of high-class works of art (as beautiful things) than other men of equal intelligence, their training usually enables them to distinguish obscure forms of beauty which would be unrecognized by the general public, and in matters of colour to differentiate between ephemeral and more or less permanent harmonies. Hence while the public interests would not suffer from the introduction of the lay element in judging high class sculpture and painting, it is obvious that the consideration of works where the lower forms of beauty only are produced, as in formal decoration, should be confined to the profession.

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In music alone of the arts, for reasons already given, special cultivation is necessary for the judgment of the higher forms of beauty.

[a] *Life of Michelangelo Buonarotti*, De Vere translation.

[b] McCurdy's *Lionardo da Vinci's Note Books*.

[c] *History of Ancient Art*, Part V., 6.

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NOTE 28. PAGE 74

It is commonly supposed that the vast multitude of men and women—the toilers in the fields and factories, and their families, do not appreciate great works of art; that rarely they take an interest in any kind of art, and then only in simple representations of everyday incidents. This is so apparently, but it is not strictly true. The great bulk of working people grow up amidst surroundings where they do not have an opportunity of seeing good works of art. They toil from morn to eve during their whole life: their imaginations are almost entirely confined to their means of livelihood, their daily routine of labour, and their household duties. A "mute inglorious Milton" remains mute because he wants the knowledge and experience around which his fancy may roam, and a potential Raphael dies in obscurity from the enforced rigidity of his imagination. But even so, notwithstanding that the nervous activities and the imaginations of the poorer workers remain undeveloped, they are still subservient to the irrevocable laws of nature. Their faculties may be little changed from childhood in respect of matters appertaining to the higher senses, but they still exist. So it comes about that in all times since art has been practised, the paintings and sculptures of the greater masters have been well appreciated by the multitude when they could come into contact with them. In modern times great works of art are seldom available to the masses except in public galleries where their sense perception and minds are quickly confused and fatigued—in fact rendered incapable of legitimate use, but the trend of popular opinion is very decidedly settled by the experience of those business houses which undertake the reproduction of important works. There are many times the demand for prints and cards of pictures belonging to the higher forms of art, as for instance, sacred and historical subjects, and portraits, than for interiors and landscapes, and so incessant is this demand for the better works, that a painter desiring to copy one of the

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great Raphael or Correggio Madonnas at Florence for reproduction, will usually have to wait three or four years after entering his name, before his turn comes to set up his easel. It is rather the want of intelligent contact with them, than indifference to them, that is due the apparent lack of interest in great works of art on the part of the labouring classes.

There is a deal of truth in the incisive remarks of Leo Tolstoy when dealing with this question. He says ^[a]:

Art cannot be incomprehensible to the great masses only because it is very good, as artists of our day are fond of telling us. Rather we are bound to conclude that this art is unintelligible because it is very bad art, or even is not art at all. So that the favourite argument (naïvely accepted by the cultured crowd), that in order to feel art one has first to understand it (which really means to habituate oneself to it), is the truest indication that what we are asked to understand by such a method, is either very bad art, exclusive art, or is not art at all.

One may observe however that, as a rule, it is only inferior artists who complain of the want of public appreciation of great works of art.

[a] *What is Art?* Aylmer Maude translation, 1904.

NOTE 29. PAGE 78

According to Lessing and Watts-Dunton, what the former calls the dazzling antithesis of Simonides—"Poetry is speaking painting, and painting dumb poetry"—has had a wide and deleterious effect upon art criticism. Lessing, who wrote *Laocoon* about 1761, said in his preface in reference to this saying:

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It was one of those ideas held by Simonides, the truth of which is so obvious that one feels compelled to overlook the indistinctness and falsehood which accompany it.... But of late many critics, just as though no difference existed, have drawn the crudest conclusions one can imagine from this harmony of painting and poetry.

Watts-Dunton, writing a few years ago, added to this^[a]:

It [the saying of Simonides] appears to have had upon modern criticism as much influence since the publication of Lessing's *Laocoon* as it had before.

Lessing points out that the Greeks confined the saying to the effect produced by the two arts, and (evidently referring to Aristotle) did not forget to inculcate that these arts differed from each other in the things imitated and the manner of imitation.

Since the business of both poetry and painting is to throw pictures on the mind, the declaration of Simonides must be accepted, but it has no particular meaning as applied either to criticism or the practice of the arts. It is merely a fact of common knowledge put into the form of a misleading *jeu d'esprit*, though one has a natural reluctance in so describing a time-honoured saying. There is room for doubt whether it really had the effect upon criticism that is alleged. Annibale Carracci varied it slightly into a better form with "Poets paint with words, and painters speak with the pencil," and it was certainly as well known in his time as in the eighteenth century, yet we find no particular evidence of weak art criticism either in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Moreover allegorical painting was not less common in these centuries than in the century following; and while there was unquestionably a spurt of descriptive poetry in the eighteenth, it is difficult to trace a connection between this phenomenon and general criticism based upon the dictum of Simonides. In regard to later times, the statement of Watts-Dunton wants demonstration.

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[a] Article on "Poetry," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition.

NOTE 30. PAGE 79

A few distinguished poets have attempted to portray beauty of form by description of features, but they have all been signally unsuccessful. The best known essay of the kind is Ariosto's portrait of Araminta, where he closely describes all details of her features and form, using forty lines for the purpose; but put together the pieces as one will, it is quite impossible to gain from them an idea of the beauty of her countenance.^[a] This is pointed out by Lessing. The very length of the catalogue is apt to kill the beauty as one endeavours to dovetail the separate elements. Perhaps the lines of Cornelius Gallus to Lydia form the most perfect poetical delineation of a beautiful face known to us, but as will be seen from the translation below, they are quite insufficient to enable us to picture the beauty of the combined features on our minds.^[b]

Lydia! girl of prettiest mien,
And fairest skin, that e'er were seen:
Lilies, cream, thy cheeks disclose;
The ruddy and the milky rose;
Smooth thy limbs as ivory shine,
Burnished from the Indic mine.
Oh, sweet girl! those ringlets spread
Long and loose, from all thy head;
Glistening like gold in yellow light
O'er thy falling shoulders white.
Show, sweet girl! thy starry eyes,
And black brows that arching rise:
Show, sweet girl! thy rose-bloom cheeks,
Which Tyre's vermilion scarlet streaks:
Drop those pouting lips to mine,
Those ripe, those coral lips of thine.

[a] *Orlando Furioso*, C. VII.

[b] C. A. Elton translation.

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NOTE 31. PAGE 80

If there be one example of descriptive poetry relating to landscape which throws upon the mind a complete natural scene during the process of reading, it is the beautiful chant of the Chorus in *Œdipus Coloneus*. The perfection of form and majestic diction of this poetry are remarkable, but the successful presentation of the picture on the mind is largely due to the simple and direct language used, and the astonishing brevity with which the many features of the scene are described. Green dells, fields, plains, groves, rocks, flowers, fruit, and rushing waters, are all brought in, and the few lines used do not prevent the introduction of the Muses, the jovial Bacchus with the nursing nymphs, and radiant Aphrodite. All modern poetry descriptive of landscape entirely fails in presenting a comprehensive view. It is too discursive—over descriptive, to permit of the mind collecting the details together as one whole. Here is the best prose version of the lines of Sophocles^[a]:

Thou hast come, O stranger, to the seats of this land, renowned for the steed; to seats the fairest on earth, the chalky Colonus; where the vocal nightingale, chief abounding, trills her plaintive note in the green dells, tenanted by the dark-hued ivy, and the leafy grove of the god, untrodden, teeming with fruits, impervious to the sun, and unshaken by the winds of every storm; where Bacchus the reveller ever roams attending his divine nurses. And ever day by day the narcissus, with its beauteous clusters, bursts into bloom by heaven's dew, the ancient coronet of the mighty goddesses, and the saffron with golden ray; nor do the sleepless fountains of Cephissus that wander through the fields fail, but every day it rushes o'er the plains with its limpid wave, fertilizing the bosom of the earth; nor have the choirs of the Muses loathed this clime; nor Aphrodite too, of the golden reign.

[a] Oxford translation.

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NOTE 32. PAGE 81

It is perhaps necessary to remind some readers that the term "invention" is used in two senses in art, referring to the original idea or scheme, or to the preparation of the design embodying the idea. In poetry and fiction the term has the former significance; in painting and sculpture the latter. The restriction in the use of the term in the last named arts is compulsory. (See Chap. III., and Note 33.)

NOTE 33. PAGE 81

Apparently Lessing did not observe that inasmuch as the painter cannot present the beginning and end of an incident, he must necessarily take his moment of action from the literary arts or from nature. The critic notices that the painter does not invent the action he depicts, but states that this is due to his indifference towards invention, developed by the natural readiness of the public to dispense with the merit of invention in his case. That is to say, the public expects the painter to take his idea from the poet or from nature, and looks to him only for correct design and execution: hence the painter is under no necessity to invent his own scheme.

It is curious that a reason of this kind for the practice of the painter should be put forward by so keen a critic as Lessing, but it is not altogether surprising when we remember the discussion as to whether Virgil drew his representation of the Laocoon incident from the celebrated sculptured group, or the sculptors adopted the device of the poet. Lessing definitely settled the point in favour of the poet as the author of the design, and since his time this decision has been confirmed over and over again by practical evidence. But the conclusion of Lessing seems obvious in the absence of any such evidence. As we must exclude the possibility of both poet and sculptors taking the design from the same original source, it is clear that the poet could only have imitated the sculptors on the supposition that they had so widely varied the legend as to necessitate a new beginning and end of the story, these being provided by the poet. Consideration of such a series of events is not permissible, as it would reflect upon the common sense of the sculptors, and actually degrade the poet.

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Consequent upon the inability of the painter to originate a scheme for a picture, the famous proposition of Lessing as to the relative importance of invention and execution with the poet and painter, must fall to the ground. The critic states that our admiration of Homer would be less if we knew that he took certain of his work from pictures, and asks^[a]:

How does it happen that we withdraw none of our esteem from the painter when he does no more than express the words of the poem in forms and colours?

He suggests as an answer to this:

With the painter, execution appears to be more difficult than invention: with the poet on the other hand the case seems to be reversed, and his execution seems to be an easier achievement than the invention.

The word "invention" is to be taken here in the sense of plot or fable, and not as the details of design invented by the painter for the purpose of representing the action described by the poet. The premisses of Lessing's argument therefore will not stand, for the painter cannot originate a fable by means of a picture. And sequential to this of course, the painter can be of no service to the poet. Homer could not draw an original scheme from a painting. Nor may the poet take a detail from the painter, for this has already been borrowed. A poet may vary a detail in a legend because he can make the successive parts of his relation fit in with the variation, but the painter can only deal with a single moment of action, and if this does not correspond with an accepted legend, then his design appears to be untrue.

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It may be said in regard to painting, that the relative difficulty of the invention (the work of gathering and arranging the signs) and the execution, varies with the character of the art. In the higher forms, as sacred and historical work, the invention is the more difficult; in ordinary scenes of life and labour the trouble involved in invention would about equal that in execution; while in the lower forms, as landscape and still-life, the execution is obviously the more difficult. In the case of the poet, the idea or fable is the hardest part of his work, but the relative difficulty of the arrangement of the parts, and the execution, would naturally depend upon the general character of the composition, and the form of the poem.

NOTE 34. PAGE 82

The works here referred to are those designed for the purpose of achieving a political or social aim, or conveying instruction or moral lessons. There are many examples of good art where advocacy of a social or administrative reform is presented by way of incident or accessory, though the art itself is never, and cannot be, assisted thereby. "Didactic Art," if such a term may be appropriately used, is practically a thing of the past, but judging from certain conventions the opinion seems to be rather widely held that art should point a moral when possible, and an opinion of Aristotle is not infrequently called in to support this view. But when Aristotle connected morals with art, he evidently did not mean to suggest that art should have a moral purpose, but that it should have a moral tendency in not being morally harmful, for art which is not morally harmful must necessarily be morally beneficial. The general connection of the good with the beautiful in ancient Greece seems to have merely implied that what is good is beautiful, and what is beautiful is good, or should be good, and not that goodness is a manifestation of beauty, or beauty of goodness. It was admitted that the two things may not coincide.

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NOTE 35. PAGE 85

That landscape painting may be of considerable value in assisting scientific exploration is instanced by an anecdote related to the writer by a geological friend. Professor Jack, formerly Government Geologist of Queensland, while travelling in that colony, having put up one night at the house of a small squatter, noticed on the walls of the interior, a number of colour drawings which had been painted by a son of the settler from views in the neighbouring hills. One of these drawings showed a reddish-brown tint running down the slope of a grey and nearly barren hill. This caught the eye of the professor who asked the artist if the colours roughly represented the natural conditions, and receiving an affirmative reply, recommended the squatter to prospect the ground for minerals. This was done with the result that profitable copper deposits were found. It seems that in Australia many of the best mineral veins are capped with iron, and run through schistose rocks traversed by dioritic dykes. Professor Jack was well aware that the hills in the district were formed of these rocks and dykes, and as the reddish-brown streak indicated iron oxide, it occurred to him that the iron might be the cap of a lode holding valuable minerals.^[a]

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[a] This note is from *The Position of Landscape in Art*, by the present author.

NOTE 36. PAGE 87

Remarkable evidence of the universality of ideals, is afforded by the galaxy of French sculptors who appeared in the thirteenth century. They could have had no teachers beyond those responsible for the stiff and formal works characterizing the merging of Norman with Gothic art; they could have seen few of the fragments of ancient sculpture; and yet they left behind them monuments which rival in noble beauty much of the work produced in the greatest art period. How their art grew, and how it withered; how such a brilliant bloom in the life of a nation should so quickly fade, needs too detailed an argument to be ventured upon here, if indeed a properly reasoned explanation can be given at all; but the flower remains, as great a pride to mankind as it is a glory to France: remains, though sadly drooping, for the petals of Rheims are gone.

Now these Frenchmen were in much the same position as the early Greeks. They were confronted with the task of making images of their objects of worship for great temples. They had no more real knowledge of the Personality of Christ, the Virgin, and most of the Saints than had the Greeks of the Homeric gods and legendary heroes, and like the Grecian sculptors they fully believed in the spiritual personages and religious events with which they dealt. The Grecian and French artists therefore started from the same line with similar general ideals, for the ancient workers took no heed of Homer and Hesiod in respect of the failings of their gods; and they both had only pure formalities in sculpture behind them. And what was the result? The ideal divine head of the Christian Frenchman is much the same as that of the Greeks in regard to form, and only varies in expression with the character of the respective religious conceptions.

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The French sculptors did not reach the sublime height of the Phidian school, nor did they attempt the more human beauty typified by the giants of the fourth century B.C.; but apart from these, and leaving aside considerations of the nude with which they were little concerned, they climbed to the highest level of the latter end of the fourth century and the beginning of the third—the level attained by those Grecian sculptors who more or less idealized portrait heads by adding Phidian traits. And it would appear that in reaching towards their goal they followed the same line of thought as the Greeks, and arrived at similar conclusions in respect to every detail of the head and pose of the figure. As a rule they gave to the faces of Christ and the Saints a large facial angle, set the eyes in deeply and the ears close to the head, and generally worked on parallel lines with the principal sculptors of Peloponesia living sixteen hundred years before their time. It is perhaps natural that they should make similar variations in the proportions of the figures to provide for the different levels from which they were to be seen, but it is curious that they should adopt the practice followed by the Greeks in the representation of children in arms, by minimizing to the last degree the figure of the Infant Christ in the arms of the Madonna. They could not have more closely imitated the Greeks in this respect had they had Grecian models in front of them. No doubt they fixed the position of the Child at the side of the Virgin in order that the line of her majestic form might not be broken, and that her face might be revealed to observers below the level of the statues, but that they should have made the Child so extremely small and insignificant considering His relative importance compared with that of the Grecian infant in arms, is remarkable.

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It is too early yet to fix definitely the position of Rodin in art. There is much sifting of his works to be done, for of all artists with a wide reputation, he was perhaps the most variable. Still he may be called one of the greater artists, and so is amongst the rare exceptions mentioned, for he executed one or two hideous figures, the most notable being *La Vieille Heaulmière*.^[a] This cannot properly be described as a work of art because it is revolting to the senses: it is merely a species of writing—a hieroglyph, and Rodin's own apology for it is a direct condemnation, since a work of sculpture cannot be good if general opinion does not approve of it. He says^[b]:

What matters solely to me is the opinion of people of taste, and I have been delighted to gain their approbation for my *La Vieille Heaulmière*. I am like the Roman singer who replied to the jeers of the populace, *Equitibus Cano*. I sing only for the nobles; that is to say for the connoisseurs. The vulgar readily imagine that what they consider ugly is not a fit subject for the artist. They would like to forbid us to represent what displeases and offends them in nature. It is a great error on their part. What is commonly called "ugliness" in nature can in art become full of great beauty. In the domain of art we call ugly what is deformed, whatever is unhealthy.... Ugly also is the soul of the vicious or criminal man.... But let a great artist or writer make use of one or other of these uglinesses, instantly it becomes transfigured: with a touch of his fairy wand he has turned it into beauty: it is alchemy: it is enchantment.

Rodin then goes on to refer to the description of ugly objects by the poets, in support of his argument that they may be represented by the painter! It was his error in confusing the objects of the literary with those of the plastic arts, that led him to carve *La Vieille Heaulmière*, for he admitted that he wished to put into sculpture what Villon had put into a poem. Professor Waldstein properly pointed out that, this being so, the observer of the sculpture should be provided with a copy of the poem when in front of the statue, adding^[c]:

and even then the work remains only the presentation of a female figure deformed in every detail by the wear and tear of time, and of a life ending in disease and nothing more. It is the worst form of literary sculpture, of which we have had so much by artists who represent the very opposite pole of the modern realists.

Elsewhere the respective positions of the poet and painter (or sculptor) in the representation of ugliness are dealt with, but it may be added that in the case of *La Vieille Heaulmière*, Rodin does not render in sculpture the poem of Villon, but only a part of it, for of course he could not show the progression in the life of the courtesan, indicated by the poet, which progression puts an entirely different complexion upon the ugly figure of the poet compared with that of the sculptor. Clearly Rodin was misled when he said that people of taste have given their approbation to his appalling figure, for it has been condemned among all classes, while its few defenders have failed to support their opinions by reason or experience.

PLATE 27

PLATE 27



Diana and Nymphs, by Rubens
(Prado, Madrid)

(See page 254)

Diana and Nymphs, by Rubens (Prado, Madrid)

(See page 254)

We may note that at another time Rodin reflected upon the character of the ancient Greek sculpture for the very reason upon which he bases his claim for public approval of *La Vieille Heaulmière*. He says^[d]:

That was the fault of the Hellenic ideal. The beauty conceived by the Greeks was the order dreamed of by intelligence, but it only appealed to the cultivated mind, disdaining the humble.

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Here also is a confusion of ideas, for the intelligence cannot dream of a special kind of beauty which would not be recognized by the humble, unless it were so feeble as to be altogether below Greek conceptions. The aim of the Greek sculptors was to appeal to all classes, and in this they were eminently successful.

[a] At the Luxembourg.

[b] Gsell's *Art*, by Auguste Rodin.

[c] *Greek Sculpture and Modern Art*, 1914.

[d] Gsell's *Art*, by Auguste Rodin.

NOTE 38. PAGE 92

Ruskin considered the figure of Christ, known as Le Bon Dieu d'Amiens, at Amiens Cathedral, the noblest ideal of Christ in existence,^[a] and Dean Farrar wrote of it: "Christ is represented as standing at the central point of all history, and of all Revelation."^[b] It is true that the sculpture is a noble representation of Christ, but this is not because it is a Christian ideal. In type it is purely Greek of the late fourth or early third century B.C. The expression is general, exhibiting the calm repose that the Greeks gave to a great philosopher.

[a] *The Bible of Amiens*. See Plate 2.

[b] *The Life of Christ as Represented in Art*.

NOTE 39. PAGE 97

In the case of the Madonna, Michelangelo does not appear to produce an ideal woman: he only gives an improved woman. His nearest approach to the ideal is in his early Pieta at St. Peter's, but even here the Virgin is only a less earthly prototype of his later figures. The Madonna in the Holy Family at the Uffizi is much inferior, being merely a slightly ennobled Italian peasant. The other Madonnas are far higher in character and seem to suggest the antique, except that the more material qualities of woman are always present. The Madonnas at the Bargello and San Lorenzo are of the same general type as the figure in the Last Judgment, the Night in the Medici Chapel, the Leda in the Bargello, and the Venus in the sketch made for Pontormo. This being so, it may be imagined when the Leda is called to mind, that it is hard to associate the two Madonnas with Christian ideals. The figures are magnificent works, but they are behind the Madonnas of Raphael from the point of view of Christian conceptions. The expression is general, and all the countenances except one, indicate unconcern with surroundings; not the sublime unconcern of a Phidian god, which implies an apparent disregard of particulars because they are necessarily understood with an all-powerful comprehension of principles, but an unconcern which suggests a want of deep interest in life. The exception is the San Lorenzo Madonna, in which a certain calm resignation is the principal feature in expression. Michelangelo was more successful with his men than with his women. His painted prophets in the Sistine Chapel are as sublime as his scenes from the Creation; and his Moses in St. Peter's is rightly regarded as the first sculpture of the Renaissance.

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NOTE 40. PAGE 99

When the Pieta of Michelangelo (in St. Peter's, Rome) was first exposed, some comment was made upon the comparatively youthful appearance of the Virgin, and Condivi relates that he spoke to the sculptor on the subject. In reply Michelangelo said^[a]:

Don't you know that chaste women preserve their beauty and youthful character much longer than those who are not chaste? How youthful then must appear the immaculate Virgin who cannot be supposed ever to have had a vitiated thought. And this is only according to the natural order of things: but why may not we suppose in this particular case, that nature might be assisted by Divine interposition, to demonstrate to the world the virginity and perpetual purity of the Mother? This was not necessary in the Son, nay, rather on the contrary, since Divine omnipotence was willing to show that the Son of God would take upon Him, as he did, the body of man, with all his earthly infirmities except that of sin. Therefore it was not necessary for me to make the human subordinate to the Divine character, but to consider it in the ordinary course of nature under the actual existing circumstances. Hence you ought not to wonder that from such a consideration, I should make the most holy Virgin-Mother of God, in comparison with the Son, much younger than would otherwise be required, and that I should have represented the Son at His proper age.

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[a] Lanzi's *History of Painting in Italy*, Roscoe translation, vol. i.

NOTE 41. PAGE 100

A few modern painters have produced works in which the Holy Family are pictured in lowly surroundings, but generally they appear to shock the public sense of propriety. Many persons will remember the sensation caused by Millais's *The Carpenter's Shop*, where Christ is shown as a boy of about ten years of age in the workshop of St. Joseph, and Holman Hunt's *Shadow of the Cross*. Later artists have been still more realistic, notably Uhde, whose sacred scenes almost stagger one with their modern suggestions, and Demont-Breton, whose *Divine Apprentice* represents the Boy Christ sharpening a tool at a grindstone which is turned by the Virgin.

NOTE 42. PAGE 108

Unquestionably the rapid advance in Italian art in the fifteenth century was largely due to the influence of the ancient Greek and Roman remains. Indeed there are very few sculptors of the period who fail to show evidence of studies in Greek forms and ornaments, while in painting there are hundreds of figures which could scarcely have been designed in the absence of antique models. True in some cases the artists do not appear to have gone beyond the ancient literature, as with Masaccio who must have had Homer in his mind when he painted his figures of Eve in the Florence frescoes, and Piero di Cosimo, whose fanciful compositions savour of the old legends wrapped up in fairy stories; but many painters were steeped both in the art and literature of Greece and Rome, and made good use of them.

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But the most direct evidence of the influence of Greek art upon Italian artists of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, is to be found in the splendid series of bronze statuettes of the period. In their monumental figures the sculptors were more or less confined in their designs by considerations of portraiture, conventional drapery and symbols, and local requirements, and while they were greatly assisted by Greek experience, yet only rarely were they strictly at liberty except with ornaments and accessories. But in the small bronze figures their fancy could roam at will, and they made good use of this freedom in displaying their ready acceptance of the first principle in the design of the human figure recognized by the Greeks—that the sculptor must arrive at perfection of form if that be possible; that this perfection is not to be found in any single form in life, and consequently the artist must combine perfected parts into a harmonious whole, independently of particular models. The agreement with this principle was general, with scarcely an exception amongst the bronze figure designers, and the result was that in the period say, from 1450 to 1525, there was executed a series of bronzes fully representative of the highest level which plastic art has reached since the greater days of Greece. Right up to the time of the maturity of Michelangelo, nearly every bronze figurine cast is purely Grecian in type, and every ornament, and even every accessory which is not from its nature of contemporary style, can be traced to Greece, either directly or through Rome.

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Michelangelo brought about a change in accentuating the muscular development of the body, and before the middle of the sixteenth century most sculptors had come under his influence. This was unfortunate for he alone seemed to be capable of harmoniously combining Greek lines with muscular power. A few of his contemporaries, as Sansovino, Leone, Cellini, learned how to join, with due restraint, his innovations with modifications of the Greek torso, but generally the imitation of the great Florentine initiated a decadence, as it was bound to do, for it was accompanied with life modelling, and so meant a radical departure from the Greek forms. Giovanni di Bologna alone among the later sixteenth century sculptors, was strong enough to move in an independent direction. He restrained the accentuation of the muscles, and lightened the Greek type of torso, combining with these conditions an elegance in design which has never since been surpassed.

This then is the principal cause of the high æsthetic value of the Renaissance bronzes: the human form exhibited by them is altogether more beautiful than the form coming within the compass of life experience. Then the details of work on the bronzes are immensely superior to those of the general modern handiwork. For instance the chiselling of such men as Riccio and Cellini, has never been equalled since their time, save perhaps by Gouthière. And how poor, comparatively, are the present-day castings! How carefully the old masters worked; how particular they were with their clay; how skilfully they prepared their wax, and how slowly and deliberately the mould! How many artists now would have the patience to make such a mould? For the beautiful patinas on many of the Renaissance bronzes, age is mostly responsible, though lacquers were often used for the provision of artificial patinas, particularly after the middle of the sixteenth century, the finest being found on some of the works of Giovanni di Bologna. The tone of natural patina depends largely upon the kind of oxidation to which the bronze has been subjected, and it is no doubt often affected by the alloy used. Few modern artists have given close attention to the alloys, while the method of casting is now usually regarded as a detail of minor importance.

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Seeing that the production of figurines accompanied every civilization from the dawn of history to the collapse of the Roman Empire, it is curious that the renaissance of sculpture after the Dark Age should have progressed a long way before general attention was again turned to these bronzes. There are a few figures of animals which seem to be Italian work of the late trecento, but beyond these the small cast bronzes made in Italy before the maturity of Ghiberti, were practically confined to Madonnas and Saints, mostly gilt, made to fill Gothic niches, or adorn the altars of churches and private chapels. Slender Saints they were as a rule, but always elegant, with serene countenances and delicate features; beautifully modelled as became the inheritors of the traditions of the Pisanos. It was somewhere about the middle of the fifteenth century that Italy commenced to make un gilt statuettes suitable for household ornaments, and fully ten or fifteen years more passed away before they were produced with any regularity. The earliest of them of any importance appear to be a couple of Flagellators from the design of Ghiberti. They are fine pieces of work, evidently from clay models made for the scourging scene in one of the gates of the Florence Baptistry—gates described by Michelangelo as worthy to fill the portals of Paradise. These figures date about 1440. There is a Child Christ of a few years later by Luca della Robbia; and two or three figures from models of Donatello may be assigned to the neighbourhood of 1450. In the next ten years were turned out some figures from remaining models of Donatello which had been used for his work at Prato and Padua.

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So far the small bronzes made were from studies for larger works of sculpture, but about this time intense interest began to be taken in the remains of Greek and Roman art, and no doubt it was the increased importance attached to the antique bronze figures, mostly household gods of the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans, that first led the principal Renaissance artists to turn their attention to similar work. From this time on, for a century and a half, these bronze figures were regularly made. The existing figurines may be broadly classified in four divisions, namely, the Paduan and Florentine figures executed prior to 1525; those of the school of Michelangelo; those of the Venetian school headed by Sansovino; and those of Giovanni di Bologna and his school. Leaving out of consideration the small ornaments for inkstands, vases, etc., the little animals, and the purely commercial imitations, chiefly Venetian, made at the end of the sixteenth century, the total number of Renaissance bronzes now known is roughly six thousand. Of these under a hundred are from models for larger works by Ghiberti, Donatello, Verrocchio, Lionardo, Michelangelo, and a few lesser lights; about two thousand represent original designs specially prepared for bronze production; some three thousand five hundred are duplicates of, or slight variations from, these originals, executed by pupils or near contemporaries of the masters; and the balance of four hundred or so, are direct reproductions of, or variations from, antique sculptures. Naturally all collectors aim for the first two sections, but the third section contains many fine bronzes, often close to the originals, with equally good patinas. They vary greatly, though they are all ascribed in commerce to the artists responsible for the originals.

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The character of these variations is best seen in the case of Riccio, the most prolific of the bronze workers of the Renaissance. He designed and executed under forty small bronze figures and groups, besides some large bronze works of high importance. Of his small pieces there are in existence about a hundred duplicates made by his pupils and immediate contemporaries, who also adapted into household ornaments, various details from his larger works, bringing up the number of Riccios made from his models during his lifetime, other than by himself, to about a hundred and fifty. These are all bronzes of a high order. Then about an equal number of both kinds of models were reproduced during the twenty years following his death, all fairly good, but often slightly varied from the originals; and finally there are Riccios copied by Venetian craftsmen in the third quarter of the sixteenth century, sometimes considerably varied, and occasionally with purely Venetian ornaments added. These last mark the first distinct decadence in the small bronze art of the period. Next to Riccio among the earlier sculptors, in the number of bronzes designed, was his great contemporary, Antico,

who accomplished some thirty or so. He differed from Riccio in that while the latter adhered to the Grecian practice in the design of details and ornaments, but varied the modelling somewhat to bring it more in conformity with the contemporary ideas of elegance, Antico kept strictly to the Grecian modelling, but commonly varied the ancient designs. There are few duplicates of Antico's work, made either during his lifetime or after. As with Riccio, his imitators overcame the difficulty of the chiselling by leaving it out, relying upon the wax to give close enough resemblance to the originals.

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Of the other small bronze sculptors prior to the maturity of Michelangelo, few executed more than half a score of figures. The best known are the immediate successors of Donatello in the Paduan school, as Bertoldo and Bellano, and the giants of the Florentine school, as Filarete and A. Pollaiuolo. Bronzes by these artists are very rare, and so are the duplicates of them made by pupils, though Bertoldo, who reminds one strangely of Lysippus, had occasional imitators for the next two centuries. These bronzes include many models which have not been equalled by the greatest of later sculptors, and they will never be matched until there arises a new school of sculptors resolved to imbibe the truths which the Renaissance artists gleaned from the ancient Greeks.

NOTE 43. PAGE 110

The writer has used Greek and Roman names for these gods to some extent indiscriminately, in accordance with the universal custom in art. Nevertheless the practice is to be regretted as it tends to complicate the general ideas of the Greek and Roman religions. Notwithstanding the occasional direct association of some of their deities with human personages by their poets, the Romans regarded their gods as purely spiritual beings, having no special earthly habitation, or sex relations with the human race, while their powers widely differed from those of the respective Greek deities with whom they are commonly identified. Authorities differ as to whether the gods were supposed to have spiritual marital relations with each other.^[a] In any case the whole nature of their religion precluded the development amongst the Romans of a separate sacred art. Their sculptured gods, which were taken from Grecian models, were symbols rather than presumed types.

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[a] See J. G. Frazer's *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, 1914, vol. ii.; and W. W. Fowler's *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, 1911.

NOTE 44. PAGE 111

If we may judge from the headless figures of the goddesses, commonly known as the Three Fates, from the east pediment of the Parthenon, there seems to be little difference between the general lines of the feminine torso represented by the Phidian ideal, and those of the Praxitelean model. The Parthenon torsos are more massive proportionately, but the object of both Phidias and Praxiteles was evidently to straighten the outer lines of the torso as nearly as possible, making due allowance for the varied natural swellings of their respective forms. It is obvious that the use of attire gave Phidias (presuming the Parthenon figures referred to were designed by him, as they probably were) a latitude in varying the proportions of the torsos which he could not have exercised in the case of nude forms. Unclothed, the figures would appear unwieldy, and the graceful flowing lines resulting from the partly clinging drapery could not be so completely presented with nude reclining or semi-reclining figures. There are other features also which prevent the nude representation of such massive forms. Thus, the breasts would necessarily be out of proportion in size, and widely separated. These conditions are common in fifth century and archaic figures, and do not appear to be defects in forms of life size or less, but they would be strikingly noticeable in super figures of the broad massive type with Phidian lines. The addition of light drapery, however, converts the apparent faults into virtues, for the artist is enabled therewith to give new sweeping curves to the forms which conspicuously enhance the general beauty of the figure.

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A still more amazing instance where the use of drapery allows the artist to vary the recognized proportions of the feminine form to an extent which would be impossible with nude figures, is the celebrated Ariadne at the Vatican.^[a] This beautiful work, which is of the Hellenistic period, shows the daughter of Minos attired in a light flowing single garment, and reclining on a couch, asleep. The upper part of her body leans against the head of the couch, but the remainder is extended nearly at full length. The extraordinary feature of the work is that the length of the figure is altogether out of proportion with the head and with the breadth of the torso, being much too great, and yet so skilfully is the drapery arranged that this very defect becomes an advantage, for it enables a lofty grace, almost approaching grandeur, to be given to the figure, which would be impossible without the exaggeration. By the excellent device of a closely arranged cross fold of drapery passing round the middle of the figure, the artist apparently shortens it, so that the eye of the observer is not held by its great length. Only one other example of the supreme use of drapery in this way seems to be known—a bronze sitting figure of Calliope,^[b] which is of the late Hellenistic period, and is obviously of the same school as the Ariadne marble.

[a] See Plate 29.

[b] Dreicer Collection, New York.

NOTE 45. PAGE 112

Praxiteles is known to have executed at least four other statues of Aphrodite besides the Cnidian example, but this last is the only one as to which we have fairly complete records, and of which copies have been closely identified. It is also the most celebrated. We may therefore accept the work as typical for comparative purposes.

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NOTE 46. PAGE 113

There has been much discussion as to whether Apelles showed the same extent of figure as is represented in the sculpture, a common suggestion being that he brought the surface of the water to the waist line; but it is evident that the painting corresponded with the sculpture in this particular. The artist had to represent the goddess walking towards the shore. If he brought the water to the waist line he could not definitely suggest movement, as a deflection of the shoulder line might mean that the goddess was in an attitude of rest, corresponding to the pose of nearly all the sculptured figures of the Praxitelean school. On the other hand if he carried the water line down towards the knees, the advance of the right leg would be most marked, and the effect disturbing because of the loss of repose, a quality at all times valuable in a painting of a single figure, and really necessary in the representation of Venus. The artist very properly reduced the portion of the thighs visible to the smallest fraction possible compatible with an expression of movement, in order to give the figure the greatest repose attainable. Under any circumstances there was nothing to gain by showing the water reaching to the waist.

Certain details of the picture by Apelles are to be obtained from Grecian epigrams. Thus, one by Antipater of Sidon contains these lines^[a]:

Venus, emerging from her parent sea,
Apelles' graphic skill does here portray:
She wrings her hair, while round the bright drops flee,
And presses from her locks the foamy spray.

From this it would appear that the position of the goddess when painted was presumed to be comparatively near the artist, otherwise the separate drops of falling water would not have been observed. The last line in the following epigram by Leonides of Tarentum indicates the ideal character of the countenance, though evidence of this is scarcely necessary^[b]:

As Venus from her mother's bosom rose
(Her beauty with the murmuring sea-foam glows),
Apelles caught and fixed each heavenly charm;
No picture, but the life, sincere and warm.
See how those finger tips those tresses wring!
See how those eyes a calm-like radiance fling!

[a] Translated by Lord Neaves.

[b] Translated by Lord Neaves.

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NOTE 47. PAGE 124

So far as the writer knows, Piero was the only artist of the Renaissance who used this mythological story for a composition (his picture has hitherto been called an allegory), a circumstance which is rather singular considering the suitability of the subject for the provision of effective designs. The Greek sculptors in dealing with the legend confined themselves to the moment when Athena threw down the pipes, apparently for the reason that this instant gave an opportunity of rendering Marsyas in a strong dramatic action. The famous statue of the faun after Myron in Rome, is supposed to have formed part of a group representing Athena and Marsyas immediately after the pipes were dropped, and the design appears on still existing coins and vases of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Piero takes a later moment, showing Marsyas comfortably squatting in the foreground of a delightful fanciful landscape, expressing boyish satisfaction with the prizes he is about to try. He is properly shown as a satyr instead of in the faun form of the sculptor. There appears to be no legitimate place in painting for a faun, while a satyr may at times be appropriately introduced into a pastoral composition.

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NOTE 48. PAGE 125

Controversy has raged around this picture for something like seventy years. The work came to light before 1850 at a public auction sale when it was attributed to Mantegna, with whom of course it had nothing to do. Then it was pronounced a Raphael, but this was disputed by Passavant who held that on account of the thin lower limbs of the figures, and the minute way in which the landscape was painted, it could not be by Raphael, but was of the school of Francia, or by Timoteo della Viti. Morelli brought back the attribution to Raphael, and the work then came into the possession of the Louvre. Subsequently Pinturicchio and Perugino were alternately suggested as the painter, and to the latter the picture was assigned by the Louvre authorities. All are agreed that the date of the work is about 1502. It does not seem possible that Perugino could have painted the picture, for the subject and invention are entirely foreign to him, while the lithe active form of Apollo does not consort with the least formal of his known figures. The landscape is much in his manner, but so it is also in the style of Raphael's early period, while the small buildings therein are closely finished as in some of Raphael's other works of the time.^[a] Perugino used similar towers and buildings, but being a more experienced painter he did not so finely elaborate the details. The suggestion relating to the school of Francia was afterwards very properly withdrawn, and Pinturicchio must be ruled out on account of the landscape, apart from the supple figure of Apollo of which he was incapable. There remain then only Timoteo della Viti and Raphael as the possible painters of the work. But it cannot reasonably be suggested that Timoteo could have accomplished so perfect a figure as the Apollo, and moreover so original a figure. It certainly required an exceptionally bold mind to overcome the difficulty in rendering the traditionally semi-feminine form of Apollo by representing him as a young man just past his teens. Besides, the general delicacy of the work is not in the style of Timoteo. Passavant's objection to the limbs is overruled by the presence of similar limbs in the Mond Crucifixion. It would seem then that Morelli was right in assigning the beautiful little picture to the youthful period of the greatest of all painters.

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[a] See Portrait of a young Man at Budapest, and the Terranuova Virgin and Child at Berlin.

The white races are here referred to merely by way of example, and there is no intention to suggest that the more or less uncivilized peoples have no perception of beauty. It is well known that both semi-civilized and savage races differ from the whites in the matter of beauty, and the fact has been partly responsible for several theories for explaining æsthetic perception, notably that of association, laid down by Alison and Jeffrey, but long since discarded. Seeing that there is no difference in kind between the sense nerves of the whites and the blacks, they must necessarily act in the same way. That the blacks appreciate as beautiful forms which the whites disregard, seems to arise partly from want of experience, partly from training, and partly from neglect in the exercise of the sense nerves. Take for example an inhabitant of Morocco where corpulency is commonly regarded as an element of beauty in women. If none but Moroccan women are seen or pictured, it is impossible for a higher form of beauty than is to be found amongst them to be conceived, for the imagination cannot act beyond experience. In cases where the Moroccan has had experience of both white and black, it is certain that, other things being equal, the white woman would be the more admired, for this is the general experience among the black races, and is strikingly noticeable in America with the descendants of African tribes. The appreciation of very fat women can easily be understood on the ground of custom or training. A youthful Moroccan may be firmly of opinion that corpulency is not an element of beauty, but seeing that his older acquaintances hold a contrary view, he may well form the conclusion that his judgment is wrong, and so accept the decision of his more mature countrymen. It is quite common among the whites for people to doubt their own æsthetic perceptions when an inferior work of art is put forward as a thing of beauty. The general want of appreciation of certain musical harmonies on the part of uncivilized peoples is undoubtedly due to the neglect of the sense nerves concerned, for these are not cultivated except to a small extent involuntarily. The most ignorant and poor of the whites unavoidably come into frequent contact with the simpler forms of art, but the savage races see only the result of their own handiwork. The uncivilized races can scarcely be expected to admire the higher reaches of art wherein intellectual considerations enter, except for their sensorial excellence.

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PLATE 28

PLATE 28



Automedon and the Horse of Achilles, by Regnault (See page 256)
(Boston Museum)

Automedon and the Horse of Achilles, by Regnault
(Boston Museum)

(See [page 256](#))

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NOTE 50. PAGE 139

There seems to be some uncertainty as to whether Fragonard intended his splendid series of the Frick collection to represent the subjects usually assigned to them, namely, The Pursuit (or The Flight of Design, a title given to the original sketch for the picture); The Rendezvous (or The Surprise, or The Escalade); Souvenirs (or Confidences, or The Reader); The Lover Crowned (or Before the Painter); and The Abandonment (or The Reverie). It is suggested that the works have an allegorical signification connected with art, and certainly three of them—the first, second, and fourth—could be so interpreted. But magnificent paintings of this kind are usually fitted for many allegorical suggestions. Each picture represents an incident of common experience, elaborated with beautiful figures in a perfect setting. This approaches the summit of the painter's art, for no conception can be greater apart from spiritual ideals. It is symbolism in its highest form—of universal experience in which all are interested. The works are not to be taken as a necessary sequence (the last of the series was painted twenty years after the others), but the scheme of one or more of them has come within the experience of every man and woman since the world began.

NOTE 51. PAGE 149

Seeing that this precise dignified pose, coming so near the line of exaggeration, but never crossing it, is present in all the authenticated portraits of Titian, save those of very aged persons, we may reasonably consider the pose an important factor in determining the validity of certain portraits as to which a doubt has arisen. Thus in the case of the Physician of Parma^[a] (this title is admittedly wrong), which has been variously given to Titian and Giorgione, the verdict must be in favour of Titian, for the pose is certainly his, while it is unknown in any work of Giorgione. On the other hand, the portrait of Catherine Cornara,^[b] commonly ascribed to Titian, but also attributed to Giorgione,^[c] cannot be by the former master; nor is the Portrait of a Man (with his hand on a bust),^[d] which seems to pair with the Cornara portrait. The portrait known as An Old Man Asleep,^[e] sometimes given to Titian, clearly does not belong to him.

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It should be noted that the general confusion observable for many years in the estimation of Giorgione's work arose from the attribution to him of paintings executed in the comparatively broad manner of Titian, but which this artist did not adopt till Giorgione had been dead for a decade or more. The recent exhaustive critique of Lionelli Venturi^[f] of the earlier master has cleared the air, and we now know the range of his work very positively. Giorgione was less fine in some of his paintings than in others, for he paid more attention to chiaroscuro as he matured, but there is no instance where he painted in the broader manner occasionally exhibited by Titian. All the works in the style of The Concert and The Three Ages are now known to be by other hands than those of Giorgione, and it must be unfortunately admitted that not a single painting by him exists either in England or America.

[a] Vienna Gallery.

[b] Cook Collection, London.

[c] By Herbert Cook in *Giorgione*.

[d] Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

[e] The Brera, Milan.

[f] *Giorgione e il Giorgionismo*, 1913.

NOTE 52. PAGE 156

Hals is another artist as to whom many misconceptions have arisen in regard to his use of a very broad manner in his portraits. There is a total of about 350 works attributed to him, of which some two thirds are single portraits, and twenty are portrait groups. The balance includes over thirty genre pictures, mostly with single figures, and fifty heads of boys and girls generally shown in the act of laughing. It is in his genre work that the broad manner is mostly observable, and only very occasionally is it to be found in his portraits. In the more important works of the artist, even during his later period, his manner is by no means broad,^[a] though it is not so fine as in his best years, say from 1635 to 1650. This estimate can however only be general, as his dated paintings of different periods after 1630 often correspond so closely that it is difficult to assign dates to the other pictures with certainty.

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Perhaps the frequent attribution to Hals of works by his pupils and imitators, has had something to do with the public estimation of the breadth of his manner. This was often greatly exaggerated by his followers, and many portraits are given to him which he could not possibly have painted. In his important work on the artist, Dr. von Bode points out that some of the duplicates of his pictures were apparently executed by his pupils, but these are not separated in the book.^[b] It is a simple matter to divide the works painted by Hals from the studio copies and the portraits of imitators. His brushwork and impasto were quite exceptional. He had a firm direct stroke, never niggled or scumbled, and his loading was restrained though very effective. Quite naturally his pupils, however industrious and skilled, could not closely imitate his remarkable freedom in handling. They were incapable of firm decisive strokes throughout a portrait, and endeavoured to overcome the loading difficulty by using brushes of a coarseness foreign to the master when rendering light tones. Moreover Hals was nearly perfect in drawing, and in this there are usually marked defects in the studio copies.

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[a] See Stephanus Gereardts, Antwerp Museum; Isabella Coymans, E. Rothschild Collection, Paris; Lady with a Fan, National Gallery, London; and William van Heythuysen, Liechtenstein Collection, Vienna.

[b] *Frans Hals: his Life and Work*, 1914.

NOTE 53. PAGE 161

The term "grace" as applied in art has so many significations that it is difficult to deal with one of them without confusion. What is here specially referred to is the grace of pose designed by the artist. The object of the portrait painter is to pose his sitter so that the grace indicated shall appear natural and habitual, a feature as important now in the appearance of women as it was twenty-five centuries ago when Sappho asked^[a]:

What country maiden charms thee,
However fair her face,
Who knows not how to gather
Her dress with artless grace?

But the grace of pose never appears to be artless, after the first inspection, unless there is something in the expression to hold the mind. Without this appeal to the mind the portrait must soon tire, and the pose become artificial and stiff, that is to say, in representations of life size, for in miniature portraiture the countenance seldom or never crosses the vision involuntarily.

In the ancient Greek forms, Winckelmann distinguishes four kinds of grace—lofty, pleasing, humble, and comic—but the grace exhibited by sculptured forms necessarily depends upon the harmony of expression, character of form, and pose. This should be the case with painted portraits also, but drapery restrictions and accessories commonly compel a limitation in the design of the artist. In three quarter and full length portraits it is impossible to depart from the dress customary at the period of execution, unless the sitter assume a classical character, and this is only possible in comparatively few instances. In any case the pose should always be subordinated to the expression.

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[a] Free translation (quoted by Wharton), the term "artless grace" being implied but not expressed by Sappho.

NOTE 54. PAGE 167

The remarkable range of Raphael in expression has been commented upon by many critics, and practically all agree with Lanzi in his eloquent summary^[a]:

There is not a movement of the soul, there is not a character of passion known to the ancients and capable of being expressed in art, that he (Raphael) has not caught, expressed, and varied in a thousand different ways, and always within the bounds of propriety.... His figures are passions personified; and love, hope, fear, desire, anger, placability, humility, and pride, assume their places by turns as the subject changes; and while the spectator regards the countenances, the air, and the gestures of the figures, he forgets that they are the work of art, and is surprised to find his own feelings excited, and himself an actor in the scene before him.

[a] *History of Painting in Italy*, vol. i., Roscoe translation.

NOTE 55. PAGE 169

This Pompeian fresco is supposed to be a copy of the picture of Timanthes, but there is an ancient marble relief of the same subject at Florence, the design of which is also said to have been taken from the Grecian painter, though it differs considerably from the fresco. Quintilian observes as to the work of Timanthes, that having rendered Calchas sad, Ulysses still more sad, and Menelaus with the deepest expression of grief possible in art, the painter could not properly portray the countenance of Agamemnon, who as father of Iphigenia was presumed to be the most deeply affected of all present, and so covered his head, leaving the intensity of his suffering to be understood.^[a]

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[a] *School of Oratory*, ii.

NOTE 56. PAGE 172

The authenticity of the Boston example of Mona Lisa is still in dispute. So far no serious objection to it has been brought forward, and there are certain points in its favour, as the presence of the columns which are reproduced in Raphael's sketch, and the bold brushwork of the drapery where this can be distinguished. But there is another example of the work in existence, and this fact, with the natural hesitation in pronouncing definitely on so important a matter, will probably leave the authenticity of the picture undecided for a long time. Meanwhile the literature upon Mona Lisa is ever increasing, and some important facts have been recently brought out. Amongst these is an announcement by A. C. Coppier that the lady was not a Florentine, but a Neapolitan of the Gheradini family, and that she was married in 1495, when eighteen years of age.^[a] She would therefore be twenty-seven years old in 1504 when the picture which Raphael sketched is supposed to have been painted. But the Mona Lisa in the Louvre was completed between 1515 and 1519; hence there is much to ascertain as to the history of the work.

[a] *Les Arts*, No. 145, 1914.

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NOTE 57. PAGE 172

The various suggestions that have been made as to the meaning of Mona Lisa's smile, seem to have no other foundation than the fancies of mystic minds. The smile has been called dangerous, sinister, ambiguous,

provocative, purposely enigmatic, significant of a loose woman, expressive of sublime motherhood, reminiscent of Eastern intrigue, and so on, the mildest criticism of this kind affirming that the smile will ever remain an enigma. It is of course impossible for any meaning to be put into a smile by the painter, other than that of pleasure. Psychological suggestions are possible with the poet or novelist, but not with the painter. If there be any enigma or mystery in a picture, then the art is bad, for the work is incomprehensible, but there is no problem to be solved in Mona Lisa's smile. It is not different from any other smile except in degree, and of course in the quality appertaining to the particular countenance. Lionardo, with his scientific turn of mind, was not likely to attempt the impossible by trying to mix psychology with paint.

NOTE 58. PAGE 178

It is necessary to dissent from the conclusion of Lessing as to the representation of ugliness by the poet. He says in referring to Homer's portrayal of Thersites^[a]:

Why in the case of ugliness did he adopt a method from which he so judiciously refrained in that of beauty? Does not a successive enumeration of its compound parts diminish the effect of ugliness, just as a similar enumeration of its parts destroys that of beauty? Undoubtedly it does, but in this very fact lies Homer's justification. For the very reason that ugliness in the poet's description is reduced to a less repulsive appearance of bodily imperfection, and in point of its effect ceases as it were to be ugliness, the poet is enabled to make use of it.

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It is true that as he cannot present a particular form of beauty by description, so the poet cannot describe an ugly countenance in such a way that it may be pictured on the mind as a whole; but on the other hand, as he can, by reference to its effect, or by imagery, present a greater beauty than the painter can portray, so he may by similar means suggest a more hideous form of ugliness. And apart from this, while a detail in the description of a beautiful countenance is immaterial until it is combined with other details, a detail of ugliness may in itself be sufficient to render the countenance wholly repulsive to the reader. Thus, if one said of a maid that her cheeks were a compound of the lily and the rose, this would not necessarily imply that she was generally beautiful; but if it were said of a man that he had a large bulbous nose, we should consider him ugly whatever the character of his other features. It was only necessary for Milton to refer to one or two details of the figure of Sin, to throw upon our minds a form of appalling ugliness.^[b]

A successive enumeration of its component parts, does not therefore diminish the effect of ugliness, as Lessing claims, but increases it. On the other hand a successive enumeration of the parts of beauty does not destroy the beauty, but simply fails to represent it.

The poet may use ugliness where the painter cannot, because his ugly form does not dominate the scene, save for an instant or two, being quickly subordinated by surrounding conditions of speech and action; whereas the ugly figure of the painter is fixed for ever. Further, the poet may surround his description of the ugly thing with beautiful imagery and lofty sentiment, practically hiding the ugliness with a cloak of beauty; but the painter can only depict the ugly thing as it is, naked to the sight, without gloss or apology.

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[a] *Laocoon*, Ronnfeldt translation.

[b] *Paradise Lost*, ii.

NOTE 59. PAGE 190

It has been suggested that the foot of Hercules in this fine bronze was placed upon the skull of an ox to indicate a successful hunt,^[a] but Hercules was a demigod, and so could not be connected in art with any but a superhuman task or exploit. Moreover the only instance recorded in mythological history where Hercules fought with an ox (unless the feat of strength against the white bull of Augeas be called a fight), is that of the Cretan bull, which was captured and not killed. There is no other sculptured figure now known where a foot is placed on the skull of an ox, but Pausanias records that he saw one in a temple of Apollo at Patræ, the figure being that of the god himself.^[b] Pausanias attributes the motive of the design to Apollo's love of cattle. There is no doubt about the significance of the Frick bronze. The skull of an ox, and rams' heads are frequently found on ancient tombs, and acanthus leaves were commonly used both in Greece and Rome as funereal signs, while the base of the statuette, which is cast with the figure, is clearly intended to represent an altar. It is noticeable that the form of acanthus leaf used is Roman, suggesting that Pollaiuolo had access to the reproductions of tomb inscriptions made to the order of Lorenzo de' Medici.

There is apparently no other existing design of a hero contemplating death, but Lysippus carved several figures, now lost, of Hercules in a sad or depressed mood. In the most celebrated of these, the demigod was seated in a thoughtful attitude on a lion's skin, and it is possible that this design was connected with the contemplation of death, because it was produced in relief soon after the time of Lysippus, and later in a Pompeian fresco, in both cases in the presence of Lichas, the bearer of the poisoned garment.

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[a] Bode's Preface to the *Catalogue of the Morgan Bronzes*.

[b] Pausanias, vii.

NOTE 60. PAGE 192

The attempt of Ruskin to raise landscape to a high level in the art of the painter^[a] need scarcely be referred to here, so completely have his arguments been refuted elsewhere.

The authority of Alexander Humboldt has been sometimes quoted in support of the assertion that landscape can appeal to the higher attributes, the passage relied upon affirming that descriptive poetry and landscape painting "are alike capable in a greater or lesser degree of combining the visible and invisible in our contemplation of nature." But it is clear from the whole references of the writer to these arts, that he means

nothing more by his statement than that a painting or descriptive poem may, like an actual landscape, induce a feeling of wonder at the powers of the original Cause of nature. The opinion of Humboldt upon the position of landscape painting may be gathered from his definite observation that it has "a more material origin and a more earthly limitation than the art which deals with the human form."^[b]

[a] *Modern Painters*, vols i. and ii., and the preface to the second edition of the work.

[b] *Cosmos*, vol. ii.

NOTE 61. PAGE 194

It is doubtful whether an artist can invent a form of tree which does not exist in nature, without producing something of the character of a monstrosity. From the point of view of dimensions, the two extreme forms of trees used in painting, are represented in Raphael's Madonna with the Goldfinch^[a] as to the slender forms, and as to the giant trunks, in two or three of Claude's pictures. The very beautiful trees of Raphael have been often regarded as pure inventions, and Ruskin was actually surprised that the artist did not delineate the "true form of the trees and the true thickness of the boughs",^[b] but as a matter of fact precisely similar trees (a variety of ash) are to be found in the valleys of the Apennines to this day. All the change that Raphael made was to transport the trees from a sheltered spot to an open position. Very similar trees are introduced in the same master's Apollo and Marsyas.^[c] Perugino was the first painter to use them, and in some of his earlier works he made them of great height,^[d] but he gradually modified the form till he approached the perfect symmetry and delicacy of Raphael's examples.^[e] Marco Basaiti introduced them into at least three of his pictures, and they are also to be found in works by Timoteo della Viti and Francia.^[f] Higher and equally slender trees have been appropriately used by Antonio della Ceraiuolo,^[g] and even by so late a painter as Nicholas Poussin.^[h]

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[a] Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

[b] *Modern Painters*, vol. iv.

[c] The Louvre.

[d] Baptism of Christ, Perugia; and The Crucifixion, Florence.

[e] The Deposition, Pitti Palace.

[f] Madonna and Child in a Rose Garden, Munich.

[g] The Crucifixion, Florence Academy.

[h] Diana sleeps in the Forest, Prado, Madrid.

NOTE 62. PAGE 194

In noting the fact that the great landscape artist invents his designs, Byron observes that nature does not furnish him with the scenes that he requires, and adds^[a]:

Nature is not lavish of her beauties; they are widely scattered, and occasionally displayed, to be selected with care, and gathered with difficulty.

Had Byron been a painter, he would have known that the trouble of the artist is due to the over, and not the under, supply of beauty by nature. The artist sees the beauty, but cannot identify it with particular signs, and so has to invent a scene himself, using nature only for sketches or ideas.

[a] *Art and Nature*.

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NOTE 63. PAGE 200

"The force of natural signs," says Lessing, "consists in their resemblance to the things they represent."^[a] In a criticism upon the second part of *Faust*, G. H. Lewes writes^[b]:

The forms which are his (the artist's) materials, the symbols which are his language, must in themselves have beauty and an interest readily appreciable by those who do not understand the occult meaning. Unless they have this they cease to be art: they become hieroglyphs. Art is picture painting, not picture writing.

While this is generally true, beauty in the lesser signs of the poet is of greater importance than in those of the painter, because a painting is looked upon direct as a whole, while a poem has to be comprehended in its parts before it can be properly considered as a whole.

[a] Laocoon.

[b] *Life of Goethe*, 2d edition.

NOTE 64. PAGE 203

Although those of the fifteenth-century artists who treated landscape seriously did not thoroughly understand perspective, yet they were seldom at a loss in representing distance, that is, in the clear atmosphere which they invariably used. They were diffident in attempting distance with unbroken level

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country, and till quite the end of the century there is no instance where middle and far distance are shown together, even with the assistance of hilly ground. The almost invariable practice of the leading painters who made landscape a feature in their works, was to introduce water leading back from the foreground, so that breaks therein could be used to indicate distance. More or less numerous jutting forks of low lying land were thrown into the stream from either side, this plan being successfully adopted in Italy,^[a] Flanders,^[b] and Germany.^[c]

Early in the sixteenth century much improvement was made in the use of water for providing distance, and a few of the Venetian painters gave some consideration to aerial perspective, but the most perfect example of this perspective in the period is contained in an early work of Raphael.^[d] In the background is a lake extending into a gradually deepening haze, and in this a boat is so skilfully placed as to increase considerably the apparent distance to the horizon. This picture is a distinct advance upon the Venetian distance work of the time.^[e] Later on in the century an artist rarely introduced water into a view specially to assist in producing distance by means of boats, more advanced methods being adopted. Titian used sunlight effects with varying shadows,^[f] or alternating clear and wooded ground.^[g] These plans, and the use of water with the addition of trees and low hills,^[h] constitute the chief devices to be found in the late sixteenth-century Italian pictures. Some of the sun effects rendered for distance purposes even before Titian's best time are quite effective, though formal.^[i]

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[a] See Piero di Cosimo's Death of Procris, National Gallery, London, and Mars and Cupid, Berlin.

[b] Van Eyck's Chancellor Rollin before the Virgin, and Bout's Adoration of the Magi.

[c] Lucas Moser's Voyage of the Saints (1431), Tiefenbroun, Germany.

[d] Central panel in a triptych of the Crucifixion, Hermitage, Petrograd. This picture has been sometimes attributed to Perugino, but it is unquestionably from the hand of Raphael.

[e] See Titian's Jacopo Pesaro presented to St. Peter, Antwerp.

[f] Charles V. at Mühlberg, Madrid.

[g] Meeting of Joachim and Anna, Padua; and others.

[h] Bronzino's Venus and Cupid, Uffizi, Florence.

[i] Schiavone's Jupiter and Io, Hermitage.

PLATE 29

PLATE 29



Greek Sculpture of Ariadne
(Vatican)

(See page 329)

Greek Sculpture of Ariadne (Vatican)

(See [page 329](#))

Lessing apparently overlooked the possibilities of landscape painting in his dictum as to progressive actions. He writes^[a]:

If painting on account of the signs and means of imitation which it employs, and which can only be combined in space, must entirely renounce time, then progressive actions cannot, in so far as they are progressive, be included in the number of its subjects, but it must content itself with coexistent actions, or with mere bodies, which on account of their position cause an action to be suspected.

It is true that a series of progressive human actions cannot be included in one painting, but progressive natural actions can be so included when the progression is regular and repeated and the actions are clearly separated to the eye. Although the painter can only depict a moment of time, he can show the whole progression, which is not the case in a series of human actions, as in the example quoted by Lessing, of Pandarus arranging his bow, opening his quiver, choosing an arrow, and so on.

Strange to say, De Quincey, in an explanatory note to Lessing's observations, also overlooks the movement of water broken by rocks, though he refers specially to landscape painting. He says^[b]:

In the succession of parts which make up appearance in nature, either the parts simply repeat each other (as in the case of a man walking, a river flowing, etc.), or they unfold themselves through a cycle, in which each step effaces the preceding, as in the case of a gun exploding, where the flash is swallowed up by the smoke effaced by its own dispersion.

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But for the purpose of the painter, the action of water breaking over ledges and boulders does not correspond with the case of a man walking or a river flowing, because the series of events forming the progression in the case of the water breaking, cover such time and space that the events can be distinctly separated by the eye. Clearly also this action should not be included in De Quincey's second category, because the repetition is both regular and (to all intents and purposes) perpetual. There should therefore be a third category to comprise those repeated progressive acts in which the events can be so separated by the eye as to be portrayed on canvas in the order of their progression, and in such a way that the whole progression, and the meaning of it, are at once apparent.

[a] *Laocoon*, Phillimore translation.

[b] Essay on "Lessing."

NOTE 66. PAGE 208

Professor Clausen relates that Whistler told him that his object in painting nocturnes was to try and exhibit the "mystery and beauty of the night." It is obvious that Whistler was here confusing psychological with visual impressions. The depth of gloom, the apparently limitless dark void which the eye cannot penetrate, mean mystery in a sense, because we can never accustom ourselves to the suggestion of infinity involved in something which is boundless to the senses. A sensation of the sublime may consequently arise, and this means beauty in a psychological sense. But we are considering art and not psychology. Where nothing is distinguished, nothing can be painted, and if there be sufficient light for objects to be determined, there can be no mystery for the painter. If he be desirous of representing Night, he must follow the example of Michelangelo and symbolize it.

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It is curious that since the death of Whistler, a picture entitled *Mysteries of the Night* has been painted by another American artist—J. H. Johnston. A figure of a beautiful nude woman is standing on a rocky shore in a contemplative attitude, with the moonlight thrown upon her. The design is excellent, but the realistic modelling of the figure effectually kills any suggestion of mystery.

NOTE 67. PAGE 231

Vasari mentions that Michelangelo, though admiring the colour and manner of Titian regretted that the Venetian painters did not pay more attention to drawing in their studies.^[a] In quoting this, Reynolds observed^[b]:

But if general censure was given to that school from the sight of a picture by Titian, how much more heavily and more justly would the censure fall on Paolo Veronese, and more especially on Tintoretto.

Reynolds himself rightly excluded Titian when he condemned the later Venetian painters of the Renaissance for their exaggeration of colour, and no doubt Titian was also exempted by J. A. Symonds in his trenchant criticism of the work of this school. When dealing with the decline of Lesbian poetry after the brilliant period of Sappho, he wrote^[c]:

In this the Lesbian poets were not unlike the Provençal troubadours, who made a literature of love, or the Venetian painters, who based their art on the beauty of colour, the voluptuous charms of the flesh. In each case the motive of enthusiastic passion sufficed to produce a dazzling result. But as soon as its freshness was exhausted there was nothing left for art to live on, and mere decadence to sensuality ensued.

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[a] *Life of Titian*.

[b] Reynolds's Fourth Discourse.

[c] *Studies of the Greek Poets*, vol. i.

NOTE 68. PAGE 232

Sir George Beaumont relates of Reynolds^[a]:

On his return from his second tour over Flanders and Holland, he observed to me that the pictures of Rubens appeared much less brilliant than they had done on his former inspection. He could not for some time account for this little

circumstance; but when he recollected that when he first saw them he had his notebook in his hand for the purpose of writing down short remarks, he perceived what had occasioned their now making a less impression than they had done formerly. By the eye passing immediately from the white paper to the picture, the colours derived uncommon richness and warmth; but for want of this foil they afterwards appeared comparatively cold.

[a] Cunningham's *Lives of the British Painters*.

NOTE 69. PAGE 249

Rodin^[a] observes that in giving movement to his personages, the artist

represents the transition from one pose to another—he indicates how insensibly the first glides into the second. In his work we still see a part of what was, and we discover a part of what is to be.

Rodin points to Rude's fine statue of Marshal Ney, and practically says that here the illusion is created by a series of progressive actions indicated in the attitude: the legs remaining as they were when the sword was about to be drawn, and the hand still holding the scabbard away from the body, while the chest is being thrown out and the sword held aloft. Thus the sculptor

compels, so to speak, the spectator to follow the development of an act in an individual. The eyes are forced to travel upwards from the lower limbs to the raised arm, and as in so doing they find the different parts of the figure represented at successive instants, they have the illusion of beholding the movement performed.

[Pg 352]

Rodin himself has followed a similar course with much success. The ancient Greek sculptors, when representing a figure in action, invariably chose a moment of rest between two progressive steps in the action. The Discobolus and Marsyas of Myron, and particularly the Atalanta in the Louvre, are fine examples.

[a] *Art, by Auguste Rodin*, compiled by Paul Gsell, 1916.

NOTE 70. PAGE 250

Mengs, in referring to the arrangement of the drapery in Raphael's figures, says^[a]:

With him every fold has its proper cause; either in its own weight or in the motion of the limbs. Sometimes the folds enable us to tell what has preceded; herein too Raphael has endeavoured to find significance. It can be seen by the position of the folds, whether an arm or a leg has been moved forwards or backwards into the attitude which it actually occupies; whether a limb has been, or is being, moved from a contracted position into a straightened one, or whether it was extended at first and is being contracted.

[a] *The Works of Anton Raphael Mengs*, vol. ii., D'Azara translation.

NOTE 71. PAGE 258

Besides assisting in providing an illusion, the title of a picture may lend great additional interest to it. Thus in Millet's *The Angelus* the associations called up by the title act most powerfully on the mind, and one almost listens for the sound of the bell.^[a] A work of a similar character is Bonvin's *Ave Maria*, where the nuns of a convent are answering the call^[b]; and Horace Walker has a picture with the same title, in which a boy who is driving cattle, stops in front of a Crucifix by the wayside^[c]. An excellent example of this added interest is the title of Turner's great picture of the *Temeraire*,^[d] as to which R. Phillimore writes^[e]:

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It is not difficult to imagine the picture of an old man-of-war towed by a steam tug up a river. The execution of such a subject may deserve great praise and give great satisfaction to the beholder. But add to the representation the statement that it is "The fighting *Temeraire* towed to her last berth," and a series of the most stirring events of our national history fills our imagination.

[a] The Louvre.

[b] The Luxembourg.

[c] Corcoran Gallery, Washington.

[d] National Gallery, London.

[e] Preface to translation of Lessing's *Laocoon*.

NOTE 72. PAGE 261

There is an antique sculptured group in the Vatican in which a precisely similar figure of the son of Niobe has his left hand on the shoulder of his sister who has fallen to her knees from the effect of a wound, and it is very reasonably suggested that the Florence figure originally formed part of a like group. But the explanation of the act given by Perry^[a] and others, that the drapery was raised by the brother to shield the girl, will scarcely hold good, as the folds are spread out at the back, forming a concavity, whereas they would fall loosely if the youth were resting. Apart from this, his legs are widely separated, and in a running position. It may therefore be surmised that in the Vatican group the artist intended to represent the precise moment when the fleeing youth reached his sister.

[a] *Greek and Roman Sculpture*.

[Pg 354]

It is curious that among the countless pictures of the Annunciation, in very few indeed has surprise been expressed in the countenance and attitude of the Virgin, though it is impossible to imagine an incident more properly calling for profound astonishment on the part of the principal personage in a composition, even in the absence of startling miraculous accessories such as that introduced by Rossetti. Probably the reason for this is connected with the difficulty of expressing great surprise unaccompanied with some other feeling, as pleasure, or sorrow, or fear, but there does not seem to be any cause why an exalted joyful excitement should not be exhibited. Mrs. Jameson thinks that the Virgin should not appear startled, as She was "accustomed to the perpetual ministry of Angels who daily and hourly attended on Her,"^[a] but it is questionable whether this can be properly assumed by the artist, and in any case from the point of view of art, the action should correspond with the nature of the event as it is generally understood. Of the few masters who have indicated surprise in an Annunciation picture, Tintoretto has gone the farthest. He shows the Virgin with Her lips parted, and both hands held up, evidently with astonishment,^[b] an example followed by Paris Bordone.^[c] Raphael in an early picture represents Her holding up one hand, but the attitude might signify the reception of an announcement of importance.^[d] Perugino shows Her with both hands raised, but otherwise She appears unconcerned.^[e] A few other artists, including Venusti and Foppa, and among modern men, Girodet, adopt Raphael's method of composition. Rubens goes a step farther, and represents the Virgin apparently standing back with surprise, though this is only faintly suggested by the facial expression.^[f]

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[a] *Legends of the Madonna.*

[b] Scuolo di San Rocco, Venice.

[c] Sienna Gallery.

[d] The Vatican.

[e] Santa Maria Nouvo, Perugia.

[f] Vienna Gallery.

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