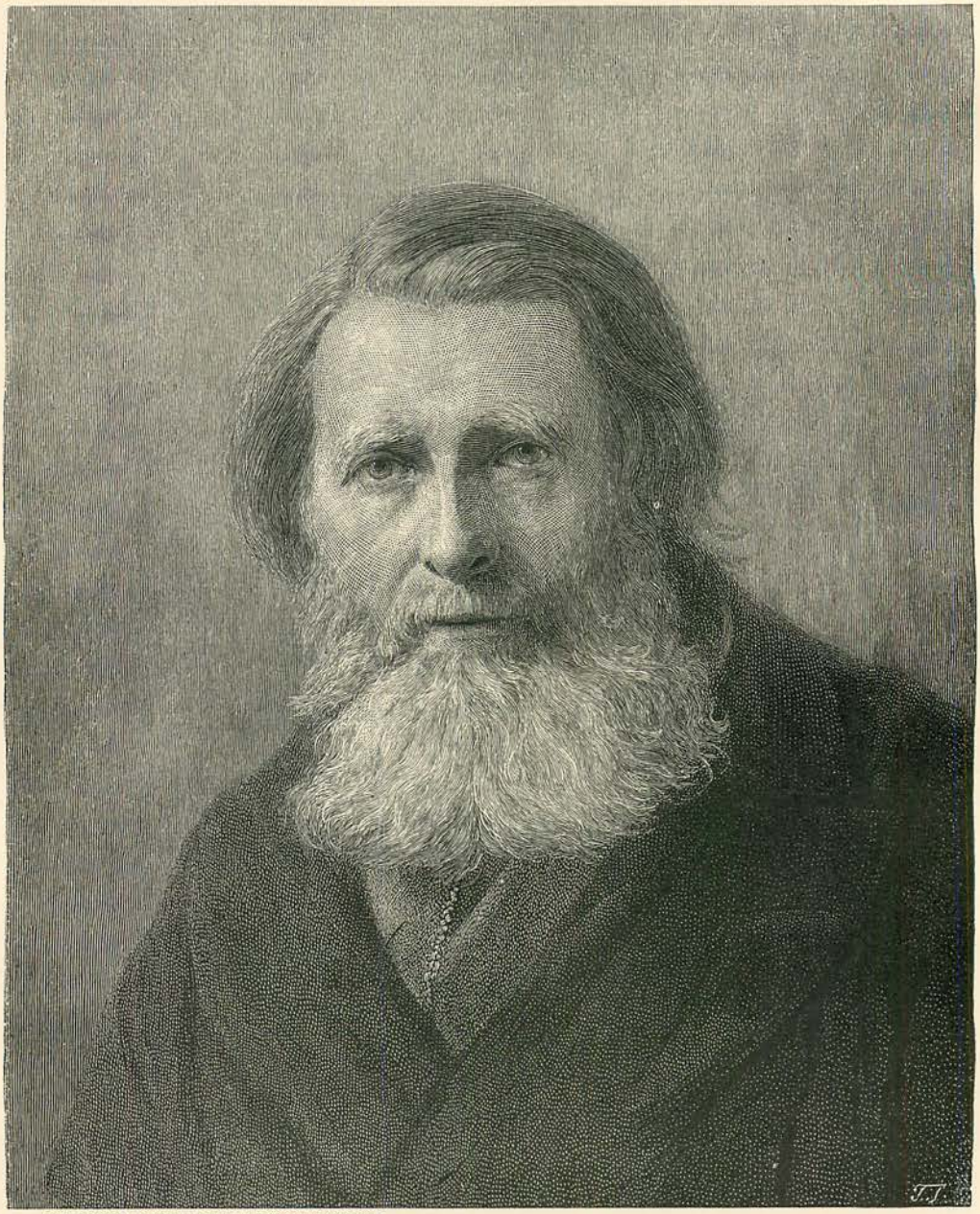
JOHN RUSKIN.

I.

I WAS sitting one afternoon with Longfellow, on the porch of the old house at Cambridge, when the conversation turned on intellectual development, and he referred to a curious phenomenon, of which he instanced several cases, and which he compared to the double stars, of two minds not personally related but forming a binary system, revolving simultaneously around each other and around some principle which they regarded in different lights. I do not remember his instances, but that which at once came to my mind was the very interesting one of Turner and Ruskin. The complementary relation of the great writer and the imaginative painter is one of the most —indeed the most—interesting that I know in intellectual history: the one a master in all that belongs to verbal expression but singularly deficient in the gifts of the artist, feeble in drawing, with a most inaccurate perception of color and no power of invention; the other the most stupendous of idealists, the most consummate master of color orchestration the world has ever seen, but so curiously devoid of the gifts of language that he could hardly learn to write grammatically or coherently, and when he spoke omitting so many words that often his utterances, like those of a child, required interpretation by one accustomed to his ways before a stranger could understand them. Ruskin is a man reared and molded in the straightest Puritanism, abhorring uncleanness of all kinds, generous to extravagance, moved by the noblest humanitarian impulses, morbidly averse to anything that partakes of sensuality, and responsive as a young girl to appeals to his tenderness and compassion. Turner was a miser; churlish; a satyr in his morals,—not merely a sensualist, but satisfied only by occasional indulgences in the most degrading debauchery; and even in his painting sometimes giving expression to images so filthy that when, after his death, the trustees came to overhaul his sketches, there were many which they were obliged to destroy in regard for common decency. It is hardly possible to conceive of a more complete antithesis than that in the natures of these two, who turn, and will turn so long as English art and English letters endure, around the same center of art and each around the other. In fact, to the great majority of our race Turner is seen through the eyes of Ruskin, and Ruskin is only known as the eulogist of Turner.

The conjunction leaves both misunderstood by the general mind. Ruskin looks at the works of the great landscape painter much as the latter looked at nature,—not for what is in the thing looked at, but for the sentiments it awakens. The world's art does not present anything to rival Turner's in its defiance of nature. He used nature when it pleased him to do so, but when it pleased him better he belied her with the most reckless audacity. He had absolutely no respect for truth. His color was the most splendid of impossibilities, and his topography like the geography of dreams; yet Ruskin has spent a great deal of his life in persuading himself and the world that his color was scientifically correct, and in hunting for the points of view from which he drew his compositions. His conviction that Turner was always doing his best, if in a mysterious way, to tell the truth about nature is invincible. Early in the period of my acquaintance with him we had a vivacious discussion on this matter in his own house; and to convince him that Turner was quite indifferent as to matters of natural phenomena, I called Ruskin's attention to the view out of the window, which was of the Surrey hills, a rolling country whose grassy heights were basking in a glorious summer sunlight and backed by a pure blue sky, requesting him then to have brought down from the room where it was hung a drawing by Turner in which a similar effect was treated. The hill in nature was, as it always will be if covered by vegetation and under the same circumstances, distinctly darker than the sky; Turner's was relieved in pale yellow green against a deep blue sky, stippled down to a delicious aërial profundity. Ruskin gave up the case in point, but still clung to the general rule. In fact, having begun his system of art teaching on the hypothesis that Turner's way of seeing nature was scientifically the most correct that art knew, he had never been able to abandon it and admit that Turner only sought, as was the case, chromatic relations which had no more to do with facts of color than the music of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" has to do with the emotions of the occasion on which it is played. His assumption of Turner's veracity is the corner-stone of his system, and its rejection would be the demolition of that system.



ENGRAVED BY T. JOHNSON, AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY BARRAUD.

His art criticism is radically and irretrievably wrong. No art can be gauged by its fidelity to nature unless we admit in that term the wider sense which makes nature of the human soul and all that is,— the sense of music, the perception of beauty, the grasp of imagination, "the light that never was, on sea or land," as well as that which serves the lens of the photographer; and Ruskin's own work, his teaching in his classes, and his application of his own standards to all great work, show that he understands the term "fidelity to nature" to mean the adherence to physical facts, the scientific aspects of nature. Greek art he never has really sympathized with, nor at heart accepted as supreme, though years after he took the position he never has avowedly abandoned, he found that in Greek coinage there were artistic qualities of the highest refinement; but Watts has told me that he expressed his surprise that the artist could keep before him so ugly a thing as the Oxford Venus, a cast of which was in his studio, and that he pronounced the horse an animal devoid of all beauty. In my opinion he cares nothing for the plastic qualities of art, or for the human figure, otherwise than as it embodies humanity and moral dignity. The diverse criticisms he makes on Titian, Michael Angelo, and Raphael, put side by side with his notes on Holman Hunt, on George Leslie and Miss Thompson in the Royal Academy, and Miss Alexander's drawings, show his appreciation of figure art to be absolutely without any criterion of style or motive in figure painting, if this were not already apparent from his contradictions at different periods of his life. These are puzzling to the casual reader. When he says, in the early part of "Modern Painters," that the work of Michael Angelo in general, the Madonna di San Sisto, and some other works are at the height of human excellence, and later demolishes poor Buonarotti like a bad plaster cast, and sets Raphael down as a mere posturer and dexterous academician, one is at a loss to reconcile his opinions with any standard. The fact I believe to be that his early art education, which was in great part due to J. D. Harding, a painter of high executive powers and keen appreciation of technical abilities in the Italian painters, was in the vein of orthodox standards; that while under the influence of his reverence for his teachers he accepted the judgment which they, in common with most artists, have passed on the old masters; but that when left to himself, with no kind of sympathy with ideal figure art, nor, I believe, with any form of figure art as such, but with a passion for landscape, a curious enthusiasm for what is minute and intense in execution, and an overweening estimate of his own standards and opinions, he gradually lost all this vicarious appreciation and retained of his admiration of old art only what was in accordance with his own feelings, *i. e.*, the intensity of moral and religious fervor, and, above all, anything that savored of mysticism, the ascetic and didactic — especially the art of the schools of religious passion. This was due to the profound devotional feeling which was the basis of his intellectual nature. He said to me once that he was a long time in doubt whether he should give himself to the church or to art. So far as the world is concerned I think he took the wrong road. In the church he might not have been, as his father hoped, a bishop, for his views have been too individual for church discipline, but I believe he would have produced a far greater and more beneficial effect on his age. As an art critic he has been like one writing on the sea-sands — his system and his doctrines of art are repudiated by every thoughtful artist I know. Art in certain forms touches him profoundly but only emotionally. Although he drew earnestly for years he never seemed to understand style in drawing, master as he is of style *(sui generis)* in language; his perception of color is so deficient that he appears to me unable to recognize the true optical color of any object; that is, its color in sunshine as distinguished from its color in shadow; and in painting from nature he is always best pleased with what is most like Turner. I painted or sketched with him during a summer in Switzerland, and therefore I do not speak from a moral consciousness. What he most admired in my work, and sought in his own, was excessive elaboration and photographic fidelity, and he did not easily apprehend the larger relations of the landscape. He used to wonder at my getting over the detail so fast; but he always got angry with the work when I reached a point where I found it necessary to bring the masses into relation according to my own ideas. At Chamonix I one day began a large study of the Mer de Glace from opposite the glacier, looking up it with the Aiguille de Dru in the center of the distance. The whole subject was rapidly laid in in general effect until it got down to the foreground, where I began finishing elaborately to his entire satisfaction, which continued for several days and until I pointed out to him a difficulty which it puzzled me to get over without violating the topographical fidelity of the study. There were several of the main lines of the distance which formed approximately radii from a point of no importance in the composition. He had not noticed it; but when I pointed it out he got into a state of vexation, and, declaring that nothing could be done with a subject which

had such an awkward accident in it, insisted on my giving up the study, saying he would not stay in Chamonix for me to finish it. As I was his guest I complied with his wish, and we left the valley the next day.

This capriciousness is a characteristic of the man. In spite of the womanly tenderness of his nature, which is, when favorably moved, of a kindliness which measures no sacrifice, he is capable, under impulse, of treating a friend of one day with the most contemptuous aversion on the next, for some whim no more important than that which drove us out of Chamonix.

There is in his character a curious form of individuality so accentuated and so imperious that it produces in him the sense of infallibility. He speaks of his opinions not as matters of opinion but as positive knowledge; yet in personal intercourse I found nothing of the dogmatism which is so notable a feature in his writing. He listened to all objections, and often acknowledged, during discussion, the inconsequence of his conclusions; and during the long and vigorous debates which occupied our evenings he not infrequently admitted error, but on the next day held the old ground as firmly as ever. His intellect, with all its power and intensity, is of the purely feminine type. The love of purity; the quick, kindly, and unreasoning impulse; the uncompromising self-sacrifice when the feeling is on him, and the illogical self-assertion in reaction when it has passed; the passionate admiration of power; the waywardness and often inexplicable fickleness,—all are there. But behind all these feminine traits there is the no less feminine quality of passionate love of justice, flecked, on occasions of personal implication, with acts of great injustice; there is a general inexhaustible tenderness, with occasional instances of absolute cruelty. Any present judgment of him as a whole is difficult if not impossible, because there are in him several different individuals, and the perspective in which we now see them makes of his position, as an art-teacher, the dominant element of his personality; whereas, in my persuasion, his art-teaching is in his own nature and work subordinate to his moral and humanitarian ideals. He always saw art through a religious medium, and this made him, from the beginning, strain his system of teaching and criticism to meet the demand of direct truth to nature, the roots of his enthusiasm and reverence being not in art but in nature and in her beneficial influence on humanity.

A little incident of our Alpine summer will illustrate this view of his character better than all my appreciations. During our stay at Geneva he had some mountain drawing to do at the Perte du Rhône, and asked me to drive down with him. Not far from the point of view which he had selected was a group of wretched dwellings miscalled cottages but which in America we call shanties,—not the picturesque wall-and-thatch structures which the word cottage calls up in England, but built of boards, shabby without being picturesque, and to my American notions only capable of association with poverty and discomfort. Ruskin asked me to draw them while he was drawing the mountains. The subject was anything but attractive or pictorial, and though it should have been enough for me that he wished me to draw it carefully, I only obeyed my own feeling and made a careless ten-minutes' pencil drawing,—all the thing was worth to me. When Ruskin drove up to take me in on the way back to Geneva and saw what I had done, he was, and I must say with good reason, offended at the indifferent way in which I had complied with his request, and after a few reproachful words threw himself back in the carriage in a sullen temper. I replied that the subject did not interest me, and that the principal feeling I had in looking at it was that it must be a wretched home for human beings and promised more fevers than anything else, and that, in short, I did not think it worth drawing. Nothing more was said by either of us until we had driven half-way back to Geneva, when he broke out with, "You are right, Stillman, about those cottages; your way of looking at them was nobler than mine, and now, for the first time in my life, I understand how anybody can live in America." It has always seemed to me that this was a true epitome of the man's nature,—first the æsthetic, outside view of the matter; then the humanitarian, overpowering it; the womanish pettishness, and the generous admission of his error when seen; and after this confession his greater cordiality to me—for he always valued more any one who brought him a new idea, though he often broke friendship with those who differed from him too strongly.

Besides this absorbing passion for the spiritual ideal, the mental constitution whose compass was set to the immovable pole of the most exalted morality, he had a curious facility for seeing things as he wished to. He saw through his feelings and prepossessions, and even looking at nature he only saw certain things, and those in general through his predisposition. So he always held Turner true although the thing he saw was false. In one drawing where Turner has given the full moon rising in cool night-mists at the left of the picture and the sun setting golden at the right, Ruskin explains it as intended to be two pictures. He praises Turner for mingled effects of sunlight and moonlight when he ought to know

that the full moon will cast no shadow until the sun has set nearly or quite an hour. Turner continually puts figures in full light in the foreground of a picture which has the sun setting in the view, the shadows on the figures being consequently on the side nearest the sun, yet Ruskin has never admitted the painter's indifference to the poets of nature.

II.

To the world at large Ruskin's reputation, even as an art critic, rests on the first volume of his "Modern Painters." Very few people have read the second volume, and fewer still the whole five, though the early editions have been sold and a reprint of one thousand since. Of this first volume, what most impressed the public was not the soundness of his views of art, of which it could not judge at all, or his knowledge of nature, of which it could judge but little, but his eloquence, his magnificent diction. Take for instance the following from the comparison of Turner with Poussin, which every reader of the book will remember as what is called a "word picture" of extraordinary power:

"But as I climbed the long slopes of the Alban mount, the storm swept finally to the north, and the noble outline of the domes of Albano, and the graceful darkness of its ilex grove rose against pure streaks of alternate blue and amber, the upper sky gradually flushing through the last fragments of rain-cloud in deep, palpitating azure, half ether and half dew. The noonday sun came slanting down the rocky slopes of La Riccia, and its masses of entangled and tall foliage, whose autumnal tints were mixed with the wet verdure of a thousand evergreens, were penetrated with it as with rain. I cannot call it color, it was conflagration. *Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle, the rejoicing trees sank into the valley, in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life, each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sunbeam, first a torch and then an emerald.* Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, *with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the gray walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted or let them fall.* Every glade of grass burned like the golden floor of heaven, opening in sudden gleams as the foliage broke and closed above it *as sheet lightning opens in a cloud at sunset; the motionless masses of dark rock — dark though flushed with scarlet lichen — casting their quiet shadows across its restless radiance*, the fountain underneath them filling its marble hollow with blue mist and fitful sound, and, over all, the multitudinous bars of amber and rose, the sacred clouds that have no darkness, and only exist to illumine, were seen in fathomless intervals, between the solemn and orbed repose of the stone pines passing to lose themselves in the last white, blinding lustre of the measureless line, where the Campagna melted into the blaze of the sea."

Magnificent this is as rhetoric, but if intended to show the shortcomings of Poussin or the attainments of Turner it is as exaggerated for one as it is unfair for the other; for the effects there described are no more in the power of color than in the feeling of either of those artists. It is not nature-painting at all; neither true to the sense nor to the details of nature. As mastery of the English language I shall not attempt to criticise it, but as statement of what is to be seen in nature or rendered in art it bears about the same relation to the most ideal and orchestral effects of Turner as those do to sober nature. I have put in italics certain expressions to which I ask the grave critical attention of the reader. I leave out the singular topographical inaccuracies which, in a work devoted to truth of nature, ought to claim some attention, but in such a work we may ask the sober meaning of such expressions as "Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle"; "Every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life, each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sunbeam, first a torch and then an emerald"; the rocks "dark though flushed with scarlet lichen — casting their quiet shadows [are shadows ever anything but quiet?] across its restless radiance" [why restless radiance except, like much else in the passage, for alliteration?]. The color epithets, to an artist, only express a crudity of pigment as unlike Turner as nature; the "arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks" . . . "silver flakes of orange spray [dreamed of from some other locality, for neither exists at Aricia] tossed into the air around them . . . into a thousand separate stars"; and "every separate leaf," show as great contempt for the possibilties of painting in the rendering of detail for the human eye as indifference to the aims of landscape painting, either by Poussin or Turner. The "Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle," is apocalyptic, not naturalistic, and the entire passage, when we consider that it is part of an essay intended to advocate the close adherence to the facts of nature in landscape painting, can only be put aside as passing legitimate criticism or justifiable comparison. It is safe to say that of a thousand landscape painters and amateurs habituated to look at nature, taking the best and the most trivial, not one who had passed by Aricia would recognize as fact a single characteristic of the description by Ruskin. I know the place better than I do New York, and am confident in saying that neither in the ensemble nor in the detail is there anything there which Ruskin imagines he saw. Much is mere sound, alliteration which is in place in poetry but not in art criticism, and much only the expression of vague imaginings far less like nature than the great scenic compositions of John Martin.

Take another instance from the section on the sea ("Truth of Water," this being the description of a picture, the "Slave Ship"). Again I italicize the passages to which I wish to call attention as demanding analysis and criticism.

"It is a sunset on the Atlantic after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds *are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night.* The whole surface of the sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high nor local, but a broad heaving of the whole ocean like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, *the intense and lurid splendor of which burns like gold and bathes like blood. . . . Purple and blue the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast on the mist of the night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death* upon the guilty ship as it labors amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood girded with *condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and, cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.* I believe, if I were reduced to rest Turner's claim to immortality upon any single work, I should choose this. Its daring conception — ideal in the highest sense of the word — is fused on the purest truth and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life . . . and the whole picture is dedicated to the most sublime of subjects and impressions,— (completing thus the perfect system of all truth which we have shown to be formed by Turner's works) — the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep illimitable sea."

"Burns like gold and bathes like blood" is, of course, again for alliteration; "Purple and blue the lurid shadows," etc., part for the sing of the sentence and part poetic imagination utterly unsuggested and unsuggestable by painting; "that fearful hue," etc., to "multitudinous sea," is simply fine writing which, when it conveys a false impression, or no impression legitimate to its professed purpose, is a literary vice, as it is in this case, where the purpose is the description of a picture.

Ruskin supposes this picture to be an attempt to portray the deep sea, but neither he nor Turner was ever out of soundings: how should one paint, or the other recognize, the fathomless as distinguished from the shallow seas? The fact is that the sea in the "Slave Ship" is a long ground-swell, resembling the watery mountains one may see on the open Atlantic no more than the water below a rapid. This form of swell and the "hollow breakers" are never found except when the sea is shoaling. In the deep Atlantic after a long gale, such as Ruskin supposes (I have seen it at its worst once only in 70,000 miles, more or less, of ocean travel by sail and steam), the great waves lift to heights such that Turner's "Slave Ship" would be hidden between two of them. They hang over you like impending doom, and just when you think that the ship must be buried in five seconds, the forefoot of the wave reaches you, and the ship suddenly begins to rise, and in another five seconds you are on the summit looking out over the heaving expanse, — black, save as it is foam-driven, fitfully rising and falling, apparently without law or order,— and after being poised an instant you feel the ship going from under you again, your breath almost leaves you with the rapidity of the descent, and you are buried once more in the deep trough of the sea for another brief space. Out of the flanks of these great waves jump and start, fitfully and unaccountably, lesser hillocks, to drop and disappear again; but when the crest of one comes towards you, you see no hollow breaker, for the crest simply pitches forward and slides down the slope — there is no combing.

Then, as to truth, Turner's whole picture is a flagrant falsehood. The most gorgeous colors of a sunset are painted in a sky where the sun has still half an hour or more to sink to the horizon; and this license the artist habitually took, although, as every artist knows, these colors never come till after sunset. The clouds are not the "torn and streaming rain-clouds" of an after-storm sky, but full-bellied, rolling wind-clouds, so far as they are structurally true to anything; subtly modeled and modulated, but as a whole as utterly impossible a sky as the sea is an utterly impossible sea. It is a marvelous picture: I do not yield to Ruskin in admiration of it as art, or admire it less for its daring license and contempt of nature's details; one can only say that it is magnificent, but it is not nature. Ruskin's feeling as to art may have been, *au fond*, correct; but it was so disturbed and perverted by his theories and the settled conviction that art was simply the uncompromising rendering of nature as she appears to the bodily vision, that he left out of all consideration the subjective transformation of natural truth which is the basis of art; or, if he reckoned it in, it was to persuade himself that it was due to a peculiarity of vision in the painter. It is impossible to reconcile all the inconsistencies into which this theory led him, such as the exaltation of painters who were mere naturalists, like Brett, or utterly unimaginative realists, like Holman Hunt, and the extraordinary judgment which he pronounced on Millais in his pamphlet on Pre-Raphaelitism,— which phase of art he desired to consider the consequence of his teaching, though, as I have heard Rossetti say, none of the Brotherhood had ever read ten pages of his writing before Ruskin had constituted himself their advocate. In some respects this little book may be considered the summing up of his art teachings, and the violence done to logic and art alike in his par-

allel between Millais and Turner is the clearest statement of his errors we possess. The function of the painter is here defined clearly and chiefly to be *topographer and historian.*

"Suppose that, after disciplining themselves so as to be able to draw with unerring precision each the particular kind of subject in which he most delighted, they had separated into two great armies of historians and naturalists; that the first had painted with absolute faithfulness every edifice, every city, every battle-field, every scene of the slightest historical interest, precisely and completely rendering their aspect at the time; and that their companions, according to their several powers, had painted with like fidelity the plants and animals, the natural scenery and the atmospherical phenomena of every country on the earth; suppose that a faithful and complete record were now in our museums of every building destroyed by war, or time, or innovation during these last 200 years; suppose that each recess of every mountain chain of Europe had been penetrated and its rocks drawn with such accuracy that the geologist's diagram was no longer necessary; — suppose that every tree of the forest had been drawn in its noblest aspect, every beast of the field in its savage life — that all these gatherings were already in our national galleries, and that the painters of the present day were laboring happily and earnestly to multiply them and put such knowledge more and more within reach of the common people,— would not that be a more honorable life for them than gaining precarious bread by 'bright effects'?"

One may reply, safely enough, that such a career is honorable in the sense that it is honest, but if the honor is that of which artists are most ambitious, it is equally safe to say that there is very little of it to be gained in that life. And this method of study has always been the basis of Ruskin's instruction — instruction for this and other reasons utterly wasted so far as the proper cultivation of art is concerned. I remember how, when Ruskin's drawing-book was published, an artist whose feeling for all the nobler qualities of art I have rarely known equaled, and a personal friend and admirer of Ruskin, said to me, "He should not have printed that; we know now just what he does not know." It is not so much that he ignores the greater gifts, but that he conceives that they can be trained or developed by this kind of antlike proceeding,— going over the earth as an insect, not even as a bird. But it is in the comparison of the two painters whom he chooses as types that we most clearly recognize the failure to distinguish between the two forms of so-called art.

"Suppose, for instance, two men, equally honest, equally industrious, equally impressed with a humble desire to render some part of what they saw in nature faithfully, and otherwise trained in convictions such as I have above endeavored to induce. But one of them is quiet in temperament, has a feeble memory, no invention, and excessively keen sight. The other is impatient in temperament, has a memory which nothing escapes, an invention which never rests, and is comparatively near-sighted. Set them both free in the same field in a mountain valley. One sees everything, small and large, with almost the same clearness; mountains and grasshoppers alike; the leaves on the branches, the veins in the pebbles, the bubbles in the stream; but he can remember nothing and invent nothing. Patiently he sets himself his mighty task; abandoning at once all thought of seizing transient effects, or giving general impressions of that which his eyes present to him in microscopical dissection, he chooses some small portion out of the infinite scene, and calculates with courage the number of weeks which must elapse before he can do justice to the intensity of his perceptions or the fullness of matter in his subject. Meanwhile the other has been watching the change of the clouds and the march of the light along the mountain-sides; he beholds the whole scene in broad, soft masses of true gradation, *and the very feebleness of his sight is in some sort an advantage to him in making him more sensible of the aërial mystery of distance and hiding from him the multitudes of circumstances which it would have been impossible for him to represent.* . . . I have supposed the feebleness of sight in this last and of invention in the first painter, that the contrast between them may be the more striking; but with very slight modification both the characters are real. Grant to the first considerable inventive power with exquisite sense of color, and give to the second, in addition to all his other faculties, the eye of an eagle, and the first is John Everett Millais, the second Joseph Mallord William Turner." "And thus Pre-Raphaelitism and Raphaelitism and Turnerism are all one and the same thing, so far as education can influence them; they are different in their choice, different in their faculties, but all the same in this, that Raphael himself, so far as he was great, and all who preceded or followed him who ever were great, became so by painting the truths around them as they appeared to each man's mind, not as he had been taught to see them except by the God who made both him and them."

And yet, between the first and the last sentences which I have quoted, the author has gone through a detailed account of the development of Turner's art, showing that it was a continuous evolution of conventional forms of treatment borrowed from earlier painters. He is obliged, to complete his antithesis, to suppose Turner feeble of sight, because he could in no other way consistent with his theory (and everything is always bent to his theories) account for his ignoring "the multitudes of circumstances which it would have been impossible for him to represent," whereas the simple fact was that Turner had, as he afterwards admits, an eagle's eye, and simply ignored whatever in nature did not suit his purpose. Turner was bred on conventions; he began in the style of the men about him, Girtin and his kind; he went through the schools of Loutherbourg, Poussin, Claude, Vandervelde, imitating everybody except the most naturalistic of the Dutchmen, but never from the beginning to the end of his career painting from nature, or in any other way than from memory, and always in a conventional manner very much influenced by the early landscape painters of the true subjective school, to which he belonged in character, faculties, and method; while Millais was a naturalist, who had no invention, no idealism, but was, and is, always working imitatively, and from direct vision, which Turner never did. Turner was

influenced, and happily, by Claude to the last day of his life, though not always obeying the influence to the same apparent degree.

Of Ruskin the writer, aside from the art critic, it is surely superfluous for me to say anything: for mastery of our language, the greater authorities long ago have given him his place; the multitude of petty critics and pinchbeck rhetoricians who pay him the tribute of tawdry imitation is the ever-present testimony to his power and masterhood. Probably no prose writer of this century has had so many choice extracts made from his writings, — passages of gorgeous description, passionate exhortation, pathetic appeal, or apostolic denunciation; and certainly no one has so molded the style of all the writers of a class as he, for there scarcely can be found a would-be art critic who does not struggle to fill his throat with Ruskin's thunders, so that a flood of Ruskin — and water — threatens all taste and all study of art. As an example of his diction take the description of "Schaffhausen":

"Stand for half an hour beside the Fall of Schaffhausen, on the north side where the rapids are long, and watch how the vault of water first bends, unbroken in *pure polished velocity*, over the arching rocks at the brow of the cataract, covering them with a dome of crystal twenty feet thick, so swift that its motion is unseen except when a foam globe from above darts over it like a falling star; and how the trees are lighted above it under all their leaves at the instant that it breaks into foam; and how all the hollows of that foam burn with green fire like so much shattering chrysoprase; and how ever and anon, startling you with its white flash, a jet of spray leaps hissing out of the fall like a rocket, bursting in the wind and driven away in dust, filling the air with light; and how, through the curdling wreaths of the restless crashing abyss below, the blue of the water, paled by the foam in its body, shows purer than the sky through white rain-cloud; while the *shuddering iris stoops in tremulous stillness over all, fading and flushing alternately through the choking spray and shattered sunshine*, hiding itself at last among the thick golden leaves, which toss to and fro in sympathy with the wild water; their dripping masses, lifted at intervals, like sheaves of loaded corn, by some stronger gush from the cataract, and bowed again upon the mossy rocks as its roar dies away; the dew gushing from their thick branches through drooping clusters of emerald herbage, and sparkling in white threads along the dark rocks of the shore, feeding the lichens which chase and chequer them with purple and silver."

In the expression of what may be seen in a waterfall, and the suggestion of what may be felt, but seen by no bodily eye, is there anything in our language that is comparable to this? But is it fair to ask art to realize it? Who shall paint "the shuddering iris fading and flushing alternately through the choking spray and shattered sunshine"? It is beyond the province of art to emulate this vein of feeling, as much as to paint Shelley's "flames mingling with sunset." But how many hapless phaetons has our Apollo of the pen thus sent tumbling down on us, entangled in their "predicates and six," or sixty! Description à la Ruskin has become a disease of the literature of the generation, and your novelist coolly stops you in the crisis of his story to describe a sunset in two or three pages which, when all is said, compare with Ruskin as a satyr with Hyperion.

III.

THUS Ruskin obstinately bent all his conclusions and observations to his doctrines — what he wanted to see he saw, nothing else. The summer before going to England I had painted a picture in what I believed the spirit of his teachings, being then one of the most enthusiastic of his disciples. I had conceived a death-struggle between a hunter and a buck, in which they had fallen together over a ledge of rock and lay in death at its foot. I had searched the forest around where I camped in the Adirondacks until I found the ledge which suited the conception, and painted it carefully with the red sunset-light coming aslant through the forest and falling on the perpendicular cliff, at the foot of which was a dense, dank growth of ferns,— all painted on the spot and in the sunset light. At the foot, where they would fall, I put my guide, locked with a huge buck, and painted them as carefully as I knew how,— the man from life and the buck immediately after I had killed him. I took it with me to London, and one day Ruskin came into my studio, and, seeing the picture, exclaimed with a gesture of disgust, "Why do you have this stinking carrion in your picture? Put it out, it 's filthy, it stinks!" etc. I was too much under his influence to weigh his judgment against mine, and painted it out accordingly. Dante Rossetti, who had seen and liked the picture as it was, coming in again a few days after, exclaimed, "What have you done to your picture?" I explained, and with strong irritation in his manner he replied, "You 've spoiled your picture," and walked straight out of the room. I *had* spoiled it, for everything in it had been chosen and painted with reference to this deadly duel, with which Ruskin had no sympathy. Death oppressed him, whence his annoyance with the picture; but that he was olfactorily impressed as he was only could be explained by the fact that, as always, he felt what he imagined or wished to see. He wanted to see truth in Turner's drawings, and he made his truth accordingly. I can but regard his influence on modern landscape painting as pernicious from beginning to end, and coinciding as it did with the advent of a great naturalistic and, therefore, anti-artistic, tendency in all branches of study, it was even more disastrous than it would have been in ordinary circumstances.

His architectural work, "Stones of Venice," etc., I am not so competent to judge, but I believe that while on the one hand he did great good by bringing out the virtues of Gothic architecture and awakening the interest of the world in the art that was passing away, on the other hand he did harm by repressing the influence of the better form of Renaissance, which is often of the noblest and truest art, and is far more adapted to our modern ways of work and uses than is the Gothic. He uses here the same bitter polemics and biased judgment as in the "Modern Painters." In the lovely little Renaissance church of the Miracoli at Venice, where are the most exquisite decorations in the style of which I know, Ruskin finds among the arabesques *a child's head* tied by its locks among the tendrils of the vegetation, and inveighs bitterly against the brutality of such a conception as putting a bodiless head in the decoration. But he never stops to think that it is a cherub among other cherubim, and that, as it is in the character of the cherub to have no body, the tying of one of them by the hair to the vine is only a bit of playful invention in which there is no brutality whatever, but the most seraphic of practical jokes by the other cherubim on the bodiless and helpless state of the charming little creature, a creation which in Gothic days might have been believed in as an actuality, but which the Renaissance only looked at as a fiction of mythology with the Tritons and Sirens, and therefore with no reverence. But with Greek art, all that in any way sympathized with its dominant character meets his anathema. It seems to me that even in architecture his influence is not catholic, but is tinged by his devotional tendencies, although he introduces an element of common sense into the criticism of architecture unknown before him.

But Ruskin's true position is higher than that of art critic in any possible development. It is as a moralist and a reformer and in his passionate love of humanity (not inconsistent with much bitterness, and even unmerited, at times, to individual men) that we must recognize him. His place is in the pulpit, speaking largely and in the unsectarian sense. Truth is multiform, but of one essence, and, such as he sees it, he is always faithful to it. I have taken large exception to his ideas and teachings in respect to art because I feel that they are misleading. His mistakes in art are in some measure due to his fundamental mistake of measuring it by its moral powers and influence, and the roots of the error are so deeply involved in his character and mental development that it can never be uprooted. It is difficult for me (perhaps for any of his contemporaries) to judge him as a whole because, besides being his contemporary and a sufferer by what I now perceive to be the fatal error of his system, I was for so many years his close personal friend, and because, while I do not agree with his tenets and am obliged by my own sense of right to combat many of his teachings, I still retain the personal affection for him of those years which are dear to memory, and reverence the man as I know him; and because I most desire that he should be judged rightly,—as a man who for moral greatness has few equals in his day, and who deserves an honor and distinction which he has not received, and in a selfish and sordid world will not receive, but which I believe time will give him,—that of being one who gave his whole life and substance to the furtherance of what he believed to be the true happiness and elevation of his fellow-men. Even were he the sound art critic so many people take him to be, his real nature rises above that office as much as humanity rises above art. When we wish to compare him with men of his kind, it must be with Plato or Savonarola rather than with Hazlitt or Hamerton. Art cannot be clearly estimated in any connection with morality, and Ruskin could never, any more than Plato or Savonarola, escape the condition of being in every fiber of his nature a moralist and not an artist, and as he advanced in life the ethical side of his nature more and more asserted its mastery, though less and less in theological terms.

If I have assumed the right to pass judgment on his art teachings, it is because I have devoted most of my life to the study of art and more years than Ruskin had when he finished his most important books; but when I come to the moral problem, so vast, so profound and momentous in comparison with any questions of culture, I have not the presumption to judge a man whose moral nature I know to be so exceptional, and winged to flights that I can only honor from below. Here we enter into a world where only the Judge of all life can pronounce and where my opinion must be respectful, for the unquestionable loftiness and unselfishness of his nature and the consecration of his life to the advancement of truth as he has seen it, give him, to me, an authority I dare not debate with, and which I insist on all the more because I know the world does not accord it to him. No one has yet dared answer Pilate, and I have no disposition to judge whether Ruskin's social reforms and political theories are in accordance with eternal truth or not—whether they are practical or not is, perhaps, a question of epoch simply.

As an indication of Ruskin's position,—more free, possibly, because more personal than

those given in his early works,— I quote part of one of his first letters to me (about 1851). I had been involved in mystical speculation, partly growing out of the second volume of "Modern Painters," and had written to him for counsel.

"I did not indeed understand the length to which your views were carried when I saw you here, or I should have asked you much more about them than I did, and your present letter leaves me still thus far in the dark that I do not know whether you only have a strong conviction that there is such a message to be received from all things or whether in any sort you think you have understood and can interpret it, for how otherwise should your persuasion of the fact be so strong? I never thought of such a thing being possible before, and now that you have suggested it to me I can only imagine that by rightly understanding as much of the nature of everything as ordinary watchfulness will enable any man to perceive, we might, if we looked for it, find in everything some special moral lesson or type of particular truth, and that then one might find a language in the whole world before unfelt like that which is forever given to the Ravens or to the lilies of the field by Christ's speaking of them. This I think you might very easily accomplish so far as to give the first idea and example; then it seems to me that every thoughtful man who succeeded you would be able to add some types or words to the new language, but all this quite independently of any Mystery in the Thing or Inspiration in the Person, any more than there is Mystery in the cleaning of a Room covered with dust — of which you remember Bunyan makes so beautiful a spiritual application, so that one can never more see the thing done without being interested. If there be mystery in things requiring Revelation, I cannot tell on what terms it might be vouchsafed us, nor in any way help you to greater certainty of conviction, but my advice to you would be on no account to agitate nor grieve yourself nor look for inspiration — for assuredly many of our noblest English minds have been entirely overthrown by doing so — but to go on doing what you are quite sure is right — that is, striving for constant purity of thought, purpose and word: — not on any account overworking yourself — especially in headwork: but accustoming yourself to look for the spiritual meaning of things just as easily to be seen as their natural meaning: and fortifying yourself against the hardening effect of your society, by good literature. You should read much — and generally old books: but above all avoid *German* books — and all Germanists except Carlyle, whom read as much as you can or like: Read George Herbert and Spenser and Wordsworth and Homer, all constantly: Young's Night Thoughts, Crabbe — and of course Shakespeare, Bacon and Jeremy Taylor and Bunyan: do not smile if I mention also Robinson Crusoe and the Arabian Nights, for standard places on your shelves: I say read Homer: I do not know if you can read Greek, but I think it would be healthy work for you to teach it to yourself if you cannot, and then I would add to my list Plato — but I cannot conceive a good translation of Plato. I had nearly forgotten one of the chief of all — Dante. But in doing this, do not strive to keep yourself in an elevated state of spirituality. No man who earnestly believed in God and the next world was ever petrified or materialized in heart, whatever society he kept. Do whatever you can, however simple or commonplace, in your art; do not force your spirituality on your American friends. Try to do what they admire as well as they would have it, unless it costs you too much — but do not despise it because commonplace. Do not strive to do what you feel to be above your strength. God requires that of no man: Do what you feel happy in doing: mingle some physical science with your imaginative studies: and be sure that God will take care to lead you into the fulfillment of whatever Tasks he has ready for you, and will show you what they are in his own time.

"Thank you for your sketch of American art. I do hope that your countrymen will look upon it, in time, as all other great nations have looked upon it at their greatest times, as an object for their united aim and strongest efforts. I apprehend that their deficiency in landscape has a deep root — the want of historical associations. Every year of your national existence will give more power to your landscape painting — then — do you not want architecture? Our children's taste is fed with Ruins of Abbeys. I believe the first thing you have to do is to build a few Arabic palaces by way of novelty — one brick of jacinth and one of jasper. . . .

"Write to me whenever you are at leisure and think I can be of use to you — with sympathy or in any way, and believe me always interested in your welfare and very faithfully yours,

"J. RUSKIN."

I could not quote from his published works so condensed a summary of the creed of the man: it maintains the supremacy of the moral element which has obtained in his life-work taken as a whole.

That comparatively few people have read the "Fors Clavigera" I know, for having occasion to complete my set not long since, I found that several of the numbers supplied me by the publisher were from the first thousand, published years ago; and yet this is the work which more than any other gives us a clear insight into the character and mental tendencies of Ruskin. He is here at his ease, not bound by any prepossessions and theories; wayward, outspoken, indifferent to praise or blame; speaking with full possession of himself and frank appreciation of his audience, addressing himself "to the workmen and laborers of Great Britain," not so much in the hope that they would come to fill his school, but because he knew that only by the poor and the despised by the great world was there any hope of the reconstruction of society, as he dreamed it, being effected or accepted. The drift of all Ruskin's preaching (and I use the word in its noble sense) is a protest against materialism in ourselves, impurity in our studies and desires, and selfishness in our conduct towards our fellow-men.

He considers himself the pupil of Carlyle — for me he floats in a purer air than Carlyle ever breathed. As a feminine nature he was captivated by the robust masculine force of his great countryman, and there was in the imperial theory of Carlyle much that chimed with Ruskin's own ideas of human government. The Chelsean regretfully looking back to the day of absolutism and brutal domination of the appointed king was in a certain sense a sympathetic reply to Ruskin's longings for a firm and orderly government when he felt the quicksands of the transitional order of the day yield-

ing under his feet, but in reality the two regarded Rule from points as far removed from each other as those of Luther and Voltaire. Carlyle's ideal was one of a Royal Necessity, an incarnate law indifferent to the crushed in its marchings and rulings,— burly, brutal, contemptuous of the luckless individual or the overtaken straggler; his Rule exists not for the sake of humanity, but for that of Order, as if Order and Rule were called out for their own sake; he puffs into perdition the trivial details of individual men, closing accounts by ignoring the fractions. Ruskin loses sight of no detail, but calls in to the benefit of *his* Order and Rule every child and likeness of a child in larger form, full of a tenderness which is utterly human yet inexhaustible. Carlyle's Ruler is like a Viking's god, his conception utterly pagan; Ruskin's is Christlike; Carlyle's word is like the mace of Charlemagne, Ruskin's like the sword of the Angel Gabriel; if Ruskin is notably egotistical, Carlyle is utterly selfish; if Ruskin dogmatizes like an Evangelist, Carlyle poses as a Prophet; and the difference, when we come to sum up all the qualities, moral, intellectual, and literary, seems to me to be in favor of Ruskin. Their ideals are similarly antithetical,— Ruskin's lying in a hopeful future, an unattainable Utopia, perhaps, but still a blessed dream; Carlyle's in a return to a brutal and barren past, made forever impossible by the successful assertion of human individuality, and for whose irrevocability we thank God with all our hearts and in all hope of human progress. The public estimate has not overrated Ruskin, just as he had not overrated Turner, because the aggregate impression of power received was adequate to the cause; but in the one case as in the other the mistake has been relative, and consisted in misestimating the genius and attributing the highest value to the wrong item in the aggregate. I may be mistaken in my estimate of Ruskin, but I believe that the future will exalt him above it rather than depress him below it.

W. J. Stillman.

THE HAWK.

I WOULD I were as eagles are,
That I might fly o'er hill and plain,
A trackless course; defenseless, bare
To the cold dash of mountain rain,
But armed against a world of pain.
Or that I were as morning dove
That shoots into her forest green;
Or that I had the wings of love,
The spirit speed, and heart serene,
Forgetting all to be once more as I have been.

For now I live where none rejoice;
I move amid a world of woe.
How from its husky throat the voice
Of the great city sounds below,
Hoarse, indistinct; — these hills of snow
Are shamed with foulness; the clear sky
Is lowered from its haughty height,
And hangs like dingy drapery,
And shifts but changes not; and white,
Pallid, and thin the sun sends down unlovely light.

But yesterday a Hawk I saw!
Full-poised he hung in the clear blue,
And servant to no stricter law
Than will or wish, he seemed to view
The city's circuits; — yet he knew
A freer heaven, and hills. My mind
Grew troubled for his fate. I stood,
And pausing pitied him, designed
For freedom and the fastness rude:
Had hunger urged, or cold or tempest him subdued?

Oh, weary lot! would thou wert dead!
When sudden he did his wings unbind,
And down the sky like light he fled
Borne on the bosom of the wind,
And left nor track nor trace behind!
And he was free! — and free were I
Love should not stop, hate should not stay,
Nor strength deter, nor orb descry,
Nor fraud impede, nor doubt delay
Thy upward flight, O Soul! through darkness to the day!

Langdon Elwyn Mitchell.