TURNER, Joseph Mallord William (1775-1851), one of the greatest painters of the English school, was born in London on 23d April 1775. His father, William Turner, a native of Devonshire, kept a barber’s shop at 26 Maiden Lane, in the parish of St Paul’s, Covent Garden ; he was “a cheerful, talkative little man, with small blue eyes, a parrot nose, projecting chin, and a fresh complexion indicative of health.” Of the painter’s mother, Mary Marshall or Turner, little is known ; she is said to have been a person of ungovernable temper and towards the end of her life became insane. Apparently the home in which Turner spent his childhood was not a happy one, and this may account for much that was unsociable and eccentric in his character. The earliest known drawing by Turner, a view of Margate Church, dates from his ninth year. It was also about this time that he was sent to his first school at New Brentford. Of education, as the term is generally understood, he received but little. His father taught him to read, and this and a few months at New Brentford and afterwards at Margate were all the schooling he ever had; he never mastered his native tongue, nor was he able in after life to learn any foreign language. Notwithstanding this lack of scholarship, one of his strongest characteristics was a taste for associating his works with personages and places of legendary and historical interest, and certain stories of antiquity seem to have taken root in his mind very strongly. By the time Turner had completed his thirteenth year his school days were over and his choice of an artist’s career settled. In 1788-89 he was receiving lessons from Palice, “a floral drawing master,” from T. Malton, a perspective draughtsman, and from Hardwick, an architect. He also attended Paul Sandby’s drawing school in St Martin’s Lane. Part of his time was employed in making drawings at home, which he exhibited for sale in his father’s shop window, two or three shillings being the usual price. He coloured prints for engravers, washed in backgrounds for architects, went out sketching with Girtin, and made draw­ings in the evenings for Dr Munro “ for half a crown and his supper.” When pitied in after life for the miscellaneous character of his early work, his reply was “Well! and what could be better practice?” In 1789 Turner became a student of the Royal Academy. He also worked for a short time in the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds, with the idea, apparently, of becoming a portrait painter ; but, the death of Reynolds occurring shortly afterwards, this intention was abandoned. In 1790 Turner’s name appears for the first time in the catalogue of the Royal Academy, the title of his solitary contribution being “View of the Arch­bishop’s Palace, Lambeth.” About 1792 he received a commission from Walker, the engraver, to make drawings for his *Copper-Plate Magazine,* and this topographical work took him to many interesting places. The natural vigour of his constitution enabled him to cover much of the ground on foot. He could walk from 20 to 25 miles a day with ease, his baggage at the end of a stick, making notes and memoranda as he went. He rose early, worked hard all day, wasted no time over his simple meals, and his homely way of living made him easily contented with such rude accommodation as he chanced to find on the road. A year or two after he accepted a similar commission to make drawings for the *Pocket Magazine,* and before his twentieth year he had travelled over many parts of England and Wales. None of these magazine drawings are remarkable for originality of treatment or for artistic feeling.

Up to this time Turner had worked in the back room above his father’s shop. His love of secretiveness and solitude had already begun to show itself. An architect who often employed him to put in backgrounds to his drawings says, “he would never suffer me to see him draw, but concealed all that he did in his bed-room.”

On another occasion, a visitor entering unannounced, Turner instantly covered up his drawings, and, in reply to the intimation, “ I’ve come to see the drawings for—,”

the answer was, “You shan’t see ’em, and mind that next time you come through the shop, and not up the back way.” Probably the increase in the number of his engage­ments induced Turner about this time to set up a studio for himself in Hand Court, not far from his father’s shop, and there he continued to work till he was elected an associate of the Royal Academy (1799).

Until 1792 Turner’s practice had been almost exclusively confined to water colours, and his early works show how much he was indebted to some of his contemporaries. There are few of any note whose style he did not copy or adopt. His first exhibited oil picture appeared in the Academy in 1793. In 1794-95 Canterbury Cathedral, Malvern Abbey, Tintern Abbey, Lincoln and Peterborough Cathedrals, Shrewsbury, and King’s College Chapel, Cam­bridge, were among the subjects exhibited, and during the next four years he contributed no less than thirty-nine works to the Academy. In the catalogue of 1798 he first began to add poetic quotations to the titles of his pictures ; one of the very first of these—a passage from Milton’s *Paradise Lost—*is in some respects curiously prophetic of one of the future characteristics of his art.

“Ye mists and exhalations that now rise From hill or steaming lake, dusky or grey Till the sun paints your fleecy skirts with gold, In honour of the world’s great author lise.”

This and several other quotations in the following years show that Turner’s mind was now occupied with something more than the merely topographical element of landscape, Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Thomson’s *Seasons* being laid under frequent contribution for descriptions of sunrise, sunset, twilight, or thunderstorm. Turner’s first visit to Yorkshire took place in 1797. It seems to have braced his powers and possibly helped to change the student into the painter. Until then his work had shown very little of the artist in the higher sense of the term : he was little more than a painstaking and tolerably accurate topographer, but even under these conditions he had begun to attract the notice of his brother artists and of the critics. England was, at the time, at a low point both in literature and art. Among the artists De Loutherbourg and Morland were almost the only men of note left. Hogarth, Wilson, Gainsborough, and Reynolds had passed away. Beechey, Bourgeois, Garvey, Farington—names well-nigh forgotten now—were the Academicians who painted landscape. The only formidable rivals Turner had to contend with were De Loutherbourg and Girtin, and after the death of the latter in 1802 he was left undisputed master of the field.

It is not therefore surprising that the exhibition of his works in 1798 was followed by his election to the associ­ateship of the Royal Academy. That he should have attained to this position before completing his twenty- fourth year says much for the wisdom and discernment of that body, which further showed its recognition of his talent by electing him an Academician four years later. Turner owed much to the Academy. Mr Ruskin says, “ It taught him nothing.” Possibly it had little to teach that he had not already been able to learn for himself ; at all events it was quick to see his genius and to confer its honours, and Turner, naturally generous and grateful, never forgot this. He enjoyed the dignity of Academician for nearly half a century, and during nearly the whole of that period he took an active share in the direction of the Academy’s affairs. His speeches are described as “con­fused, tedious, obscure, and extremely difficult to follow”; but at council meetings he was ever anxious to allay anger and bitter controversy. His opinions on art were always