

Landscapes

Émile Michel

Author: Émile Michel

Layout:

Baseline Co. Ltd
61A-63A Vo Van Tan Street
4th Floor
District 3, Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

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Preface

This book does not claim to be a complete history of landscape painting. The length of such a history would considerably exceed the proportions of this volume, but I have nevertheless endeavoured to give some idea of the order in which the different masters appeared, and of the relative importance of each. Having only to speak here of those who excelled, I have tried to show, in some sort of sequence, whence these artists came, the special merit of each, and his influence on the development of art.

This chronological order was imposed by the subject itself. It is also helpful for the explanation of certain facts. The development of landscape painting did not take place simultaneously, but by turns in the various schools according to the preoccupations of the various regions, and the genius of the great artists distinguished as its exponents.

Our study begins with the Renaissance. As the imitation of nature played but a minor part in antiquity, we need not look for masters in landscape painting there. In Greece, the anthropomorphism of religion prevailed in art as in literature, and among the statuary of the great epoch there is scarcely a fragment of rock or a tree trunk with ivy or vine leaves clinging to it to be found. Although landscape painting occupies a fairly important place in the villas of Rome and the Campagna, it always remains purely decorative, and the pictorial elements to be found in it seem to be merely accidental. Such work, too, was anonymous, and of a secondary order whose facile execution denoted a certain skill: but it does not compare with that close interpretation of nature in which all details are used to enhance the general effect.

We shall not attempt to discuss, in this volume, the way in which landscape painting has been understood and practised in the

Pieter Bruegel the Elder,
The Magpie on the Gallows (Peasants "dancing under the gallows") (detail), 1568.
Oil on panel, 45.6 x 50.8 cm.
Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany.

Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal),
The Porta Portello, Padua (detail), c.1741-1742.
Oil on canvas, 62 x 109 cm.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
(p. 8-9)

Far East. In Japanese albums, particularly in those of Hokusai, the varied subjects are rendered with a lifelike and piquant conciseness. Except for degrees of dexterity, these somewhat summary sketches, accented with a clever lightness of touch and drawn without models, are a result of very similar formulæ. Charming though they are, they lack the individual originality and that rich diversity of feeling that can be appreciated in the European masters. It is to the latter, therefore, that we shall confine our study.

Among these we shall notice many artists who were not exclusively landscapists, and side by side with Claude, J. van Ruisdael, Constable, Corot, Rousseau, and Daubigny, several great masters, such as Van Eyck, Titian, Dürer, Poussin, Rubens, Rembrandt and Velázquez, who practised all branches of art, have their place in this volume by virtue of the skill with which they interpreted nature and expressed her beauties. In order to better understand them, I have studied these artists both in their works and in the countries in which they lived, and have endeavoured to point out any special features peculiar to them and to judge the sincerity of their interpretations. It is impossible to thoroughly appreciate Claude and Poussin without having seen Italy, when, different as was their style, it becomes evident that the same scenery inspired them both. It is the same in Holland; at every step one discovers the humble subjects of which Van Goyen, J. van Ruisdael, and Van de Velde have given us such faithful and poetical representations. By living again with them in the countries where their talent was formed, I have more than once come across their favourite haunts, and even the very spot at which they halted.

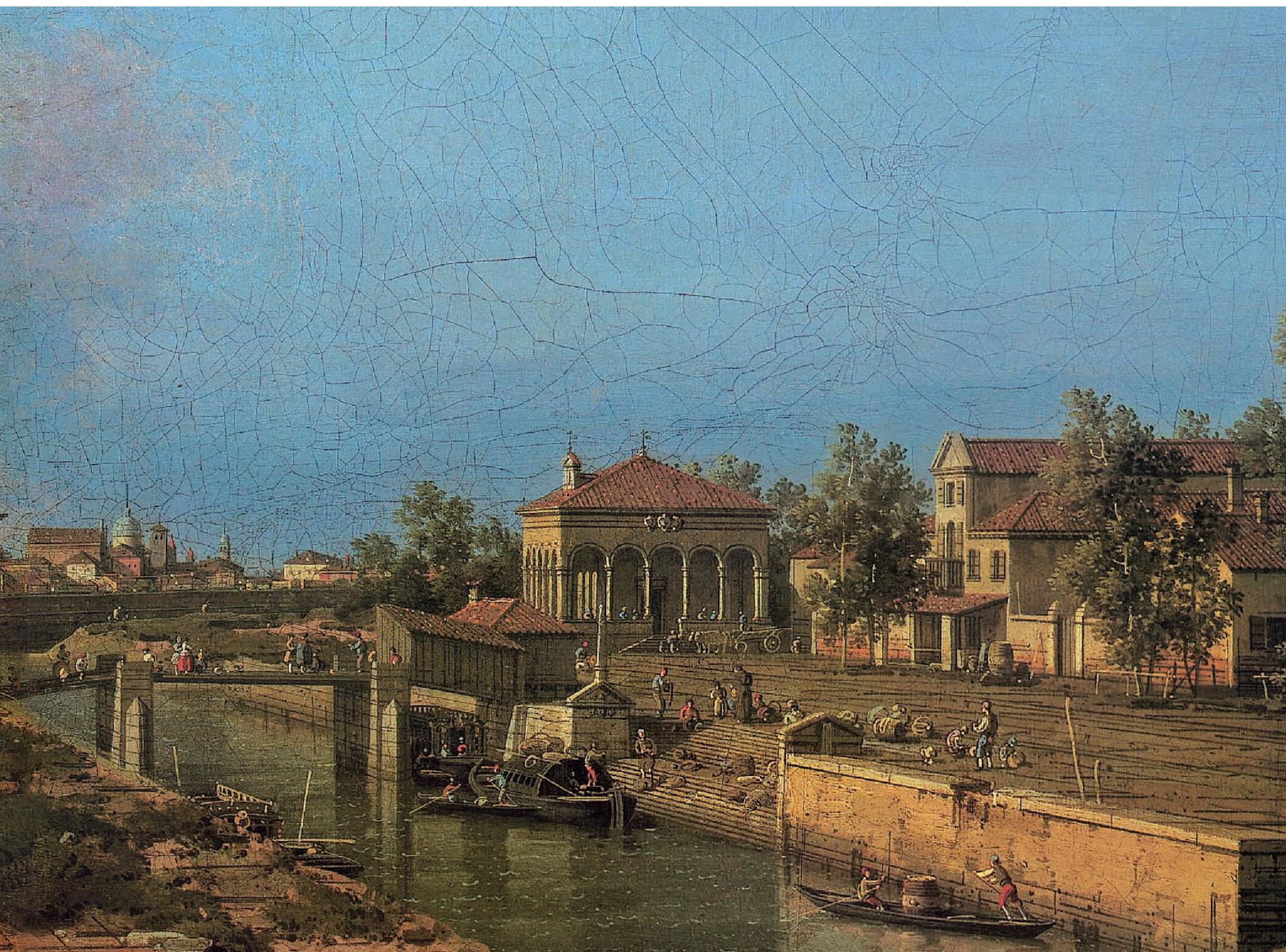
As regards modern times, it is the uniquely enviable privilege of my age to have come in contact with most of the landscapists who have been the glory of the nineteenth century school. Some of the details which I give concerning them, their careers and their ideas, I have had either from their own lips or from their friends and acquaintances. But to criticize impartially the artists of one's own day, one must not be too near them, and it is for this reason that this volume deals only with those who are no longer with us.

Having made frequent comparisons of very dissimilar works, I have developed the faculty of admiring the most diverse styles and of recognising talent wherever it is to be found.



Chapter 1

The Masters of Landscape Painting in Italy





Landscape painting made its appearance very late in Christian art, and for a long time it played but a minor part. It is not our intention here to treat its humble origins: a few words will suffice to show the clumsiness of its first attempts and the slowness with which it developed. In the mosaics, as in the primitive miniatures, picturesque elements borrowed from nature held a considerable place from an early date, but these purely decorative elements were reproduced in so rudimentary a fashion, that those who depicted them considered it prudent to add the names of the objects which they meant to portray.

In the long and profound obscurity which enveloped Western Europe during the Middle Ages, the first symptoms of revival are so rare and so faint that it is difficult to distinguish them from the ruins left by vanished civilisations.

During the sanguinary struggles that marked those centuries of cultural atrophy, it seems as though art had been on the verge of foundering completely, until beliefs more elevated and more humane finally supplanted the narrow and savage formalism that had been enforced by a myriad of despotic landlords and religious authorities.

Nature, for a long time considered as an enemy, disclosed her beauties to the tender and ardent soul of St. Francis (1182-1226). In the depth of the solitude to which he is attracted, God speaks to him, and in the most insignificant creatures he recognises the work of the Creator, which he celebrated in impassioned accents such as Europe had not yet heard.

As Frederic Ozanam says, the Basilica of Assisi, the venerated tomb of the saint, was destined to be the cradle of a new art. It was at Assisi that Giotto (1267-1337) opened up hitherto unexplored paths for painting. True, landscape painting plays a very secondary part in his works, and a return to the direct observation of nature is manifested more particularly by a closer study of the human figure. But his desire for truth urged him on to represent with greater exactness the various spots where he placed his compositions, to introduce into them picturesque details which his predecessors had neglected: some semblance of architecture, rocks of strange forms and colours, with shrubs or trees growing in their crevices. His perspective was childish; the proportions of objects were scarcely respected at all; the houses were too small to shelter the persons near them; the colouring was dull and monotonous, and the forms were rudimentary and simplified to excess.

Sculptors, and particularly Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455), drew largely from nature in their works, reproducing minor details with



Leonardo da Vinci,
Mona Lisa (Portrait of Lisa Gherardini, wife of Francesco del Giocondo), 1503-1506.
Oil on poplar, 77 x 53 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Raphael (Raffaello Santi),
La Belle Jardinière, also known as *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist in a Landscape*, 1507-1508.
Oil on wood, 122 x 80 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Correggio (Antonio Allegri),

Jupiter and Io, c.1531.

Oil on canvas, 162 x 73.5 cm.

Gemäldegalerie, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Vienna.

Raphael (Raffaello Santi),

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes (Luke 5: 1-11), c.1515-1516.

Gouache on paper laid onto canvas, 32 x 39 cm.

Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

grace and exactness; whilst Giotto di Bondone's successors for a long time copied one another. But just as the study of the forms and proportions of the human body was developed by the observance of anatomy, that of the representation of landscape gradually gained in breadth and precision from a more correct knowledge of the laws of perspective. A delicate and careful observation of the hidden beauties of nature led to its being gradually brought into the composition of the sacred subjects treated by the Umbrian painters.

But landscape was usually treated merely as an accessory. It might serve to help or complete the expression, the principal theme of which was the figure. Such was the doctrine of the great masters of the Renaissance, practised by them with the differences which were the result of the diversity of their genius. Landscape is quite absent in the work of Michelangelo. There is scarcely a vestige of sky, a bush or a rock in the superb compositions on the arches or walls of the Sistine Chapel. There man is the sole theme.

It was impossible, on the other hand, that Leonardo, curious as he was about everything, could be indifferent to the study of nature. He observed it with the mind of a savant and loved it with the soul of an artist. The laws of light and of perspective, the formation of the clouds, the flowing of water, the various plants and trees, all interested him. With the arrival of spring we find him drawing flowers, gathered during his walks, and using these sketches for enriching the foregrounds of his *Bacchus*, his *St. John*, and his *Holy Family*. But these graceful plants were not for his *Gioconda*. Behind her he painted rocky defiles, winding paths, threatening peaks which rise up on all sides as if to shut out the horizon, all this wild scenery serving as a background for the beauty of that strange creature with her feline mouth and gaze.

Raphael (1483-1520) went further than Leonardo, giving to the extremely varied subjects that he treated the picturesque framework best suited to them. For him the accompanying landscape was not, as with his master, a scrap of nature taken haphazard without relation to the episodes to which it served as a background. Raphael would never have been satisfied with the backgrounds Perugino gives to his Madonnas. He was always careful to have correct proportions, and he makes them interesting by a choice of details, at the same time clearly showing their meaning. Everything is soft and chaste around the Virgin, in the Louvre known as *La Belle Jardinière*. Her fair hair and fresh face stand out in relief against the clear morning sky; a bluish horizon bounds the peaceful plain, there is limpid water to animate the scene, and a carpet of verdure under her bare feet; the air is perfumed with spring plants, strawberry blossoms, wild geraniums and columbine. The happy harmony of landscape



which suits the general characteristics of the compositions as in *Parnassus*, *The Dispute of the Sacrament*, *The Deliverance of St. Peter*, and the *Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, is amazing.

After Raphael, the Umbrian School, having reached its zenith, was destined to degenerate rapidly. But in that privileged land art was not exhausted. Its creative activity, confined at first to the centre of Italy, advanced gradually towards the North, where, whilst prolonging the era of the great artists, it was destined to produce fresh masterpieces. Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506), one of the most original of the precursors and perhaps the one who was destined to exercise the greatest influence over his contemporaries, was born at Isola di Carturo. Attracted equally by nature and by antiquity, he endeavoured with great individuality to unite all that could be learnt from the old masters and from a persistent study of reality. He was, in this respect, the living incarnation of the many and various aspirations of the Renaissance. In this synthesis of the universality of things at which he was aiming, force was to be seen rather than grace, and, side by side with his magnificent divinations and his wonderful inspirations, his powerful and austere style has something indescribably rough and terrible. He had his moments of relaxation, however, and then communed sincerely with nature.

Behind his stiff, solemn Madonnas, he loved to weave heavy garlands of leaves, flowers and fruits; or, as in the *Parnassus*, to depict a rich country with scattered towns and castles between the weird fissures in overhanging rocks.

This mass of somewhat incoherent detail, and the minute finish which we notice in the works of Mantegna's maturity, were allied to a sense of the picturesque. And yet, although a comparatively short interval separates him from Correggio (1489-1534), the latter gives a very much freer, larger, and truer interpretation of nature. Mantegna is as hard, harsh, violent, and complex as the Parma master is simple, graceful, and restrained. Correggio shows us kindly nature, blossoming under clement skies. There are undulating outlines delicately softened, a delicious lingering light in place of the crude, hard daylight and the stiff, angular lines of primitive style. Chiaroscuro had been attempted by Leonardo, but with Correggio it became an element of expression, which was destined to increase the resources of painting.

The episodes taken from fable appealed, more than religious subjects, to the characteristics of his talent. For instance, *Io swooning* is enwrapped by the cloud; *Leda* and a gay band of companions

are pursued by the swans when sporting in the water. *Antiope* is one of his masterpieces. The nymph, whose beautiful form Jupiter discovers, is sleeping; the white cloud passing above, and the leaves of the oak tree, stirred by the wind, throw their changing shadows and reflections over her, thus lending an additional charm to the picture. Owing to this harmonious union of humanity and nature, the master gives us such an ensemble of rich colours and forms that one sees the harmony at a glance and cannot fail to be fascinated by it.

Great as it was, Correggio allotted a portion of his work to nature; however, it was with the masters of the Venetian School that landscape painting was to find its full development. With the exception of portrait painting, which held its own by its direct imitation of nature, and thus for some time maintained a certain superiority, the other branches of art, after their period of splendour, rapidly declined everywhere else in Italy. It was on account of this decadence, that the Carracci endeavoured to bring about a reaction in Bologna by its revival. Far from not appreciating the worth of the great masters who had preceded them, the innovators proclaimed their admiration for them and, without pretending to surpass them in the various points in which they excelled, their ambition was to blend the special qualities of each into a harmonious whole.

The human figure remained the principal object of their study, but the Carracci understood what additional interest landscape would lend to their compositions. They therefore gave an important place to it in large decorative paintings. Annibale (1560-1609), the younger of the two brothers, who was alone entrusted with the execution of the latter work in Bologna and the Farnese Palace, Rome, was not, at that time, sufficiently skilled in this special branch to be able to treat landscape in a very individual manner. He was working with an abstract ideal, and he put the most incongruous details into this work, with deplorable facility. Lacking fresh ideas, he inevitably fell back upon the same forms and colour schemes. His pictures suggest a mass of confused memories; so much so, that upon coming across one of these pictures for the first time we are apt to think we have seen it before. In the Louvre, however, there are two large paintings, *Hunting* and *Fishing*, which are worthy of special mention. In the latter picture the artist, impressed no doubt by a similar sight which he had witnessed, has grouped the various figures very cleverly. A deep sense of nature is lacking in these works, but they are very decorative on account of the breadth, the sureness, and the ease of their execution.

Venice must be considered as the true cradle of landscape. This privilege seemed to be reserved for this city by its very topography. The other Italian cities in the Middle Ages, had only a narrow

horizon before them. From Venice, on the contrary, the view extended on all sides over the sea, and, in the distance, over vast plains of land dominated by the Alpine peaks. The city itself is a joy to the eye.

Nevertheless, art was slow in responding to the call of nature.

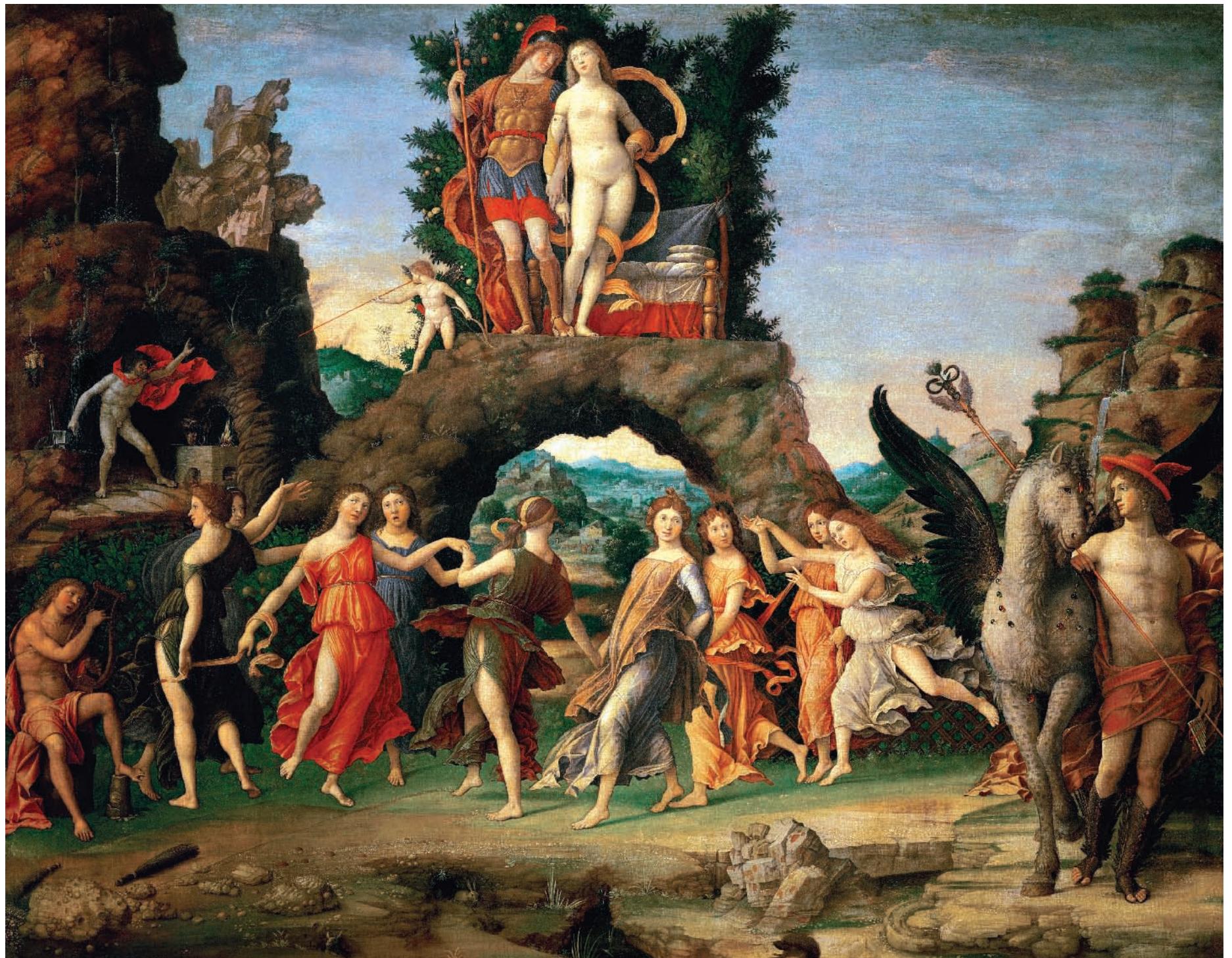
Absorbed for a long time by various difficulties which it was necessary to overcome in order to secure its existence in so exceptional a location, Venice had held back aloof from the great movement of artistic revival which had begun in the centre of Italy. But when, with the prosperity which was the result of its daring enterprises, Venice realised that art was destined to be the supreme luxury of her wealth, it very quickly assimilated the learning acquired by the other schools at the price of continual effort.

Freer from the hieratic formulas which weighed so heavily on their fellow Italian artists, the Venetian masters brought more original aims into their painting. Frequent interaction with the artists of the North had made them more attentive to the beauties of nature. The new process of oil-painting supplied them with the technical resources which enabled them to express themselves with more brilliancy.

Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516), the younger son of Jacopo, had talent and an open mind and was destined to exercise great influence over the tendency of this school. His early works have more than once been mistaken for those of Mantegna, his brother-in-law. It seems, too, as though, like the latter, he was trying at that time to establish a more or less strict relationship between the characteristics of the scenes he was representing and the landscape which served him for the setting.

In *The Agony in the Garden*, the picturesque scenery lends great force to the expression of this pitiable subject. The artist, it is true, does not attempt to localise the episode he is treating, but the impression of sadness suggested by this rugged country is increased by one of those twilight effects which Italian painters had not hitherto attempted. In the sky, all empurpled by the setting sun, a few light clouds are just tinged with the last rays and with the dark shadows that are stealing over the country. The figure of Christ absorbed in prayer, not far away from the sleeping apostles, appears still more pitiable, deserted as he is by men, and seen with the silence falling around him.

Later on, in the works of Bellini, landscape was to have a more important place. The artist then copied nature with more scrupulous exactness, but he no longer sought in it such harmony with the character of his composition.



Andrea Mantegna,
Le Parnasse (Mars and Venus), 1497.
Tempera on canvas, 159 x 192 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



One would like to linger on these precursors and to breathe the first perfumes of nature emanating from their works, but we must carry on to the complete expansion of an art for which Bellini had prepared the way. Towards the end of his long career, the great artist, in his turn, was destined to be influenced by his two most illustrious pupils, and to follow them in paths which he had opened out to their genius.

With regards to dates, the first of these pupils was Giorgio Barbarelli da Castelfranco (1478-1510), celebrated as Giorgione. It is known that towards 1505, Giorgione, after frequenting the studio of Giovanni Bellini, painted, according to the fashion of the time, the façades of several buildings in Venice. These works prove the facility of his talent, but it is most probable that neither his taste nor his turn of mind fitted him for such tasks. It was to nature that he went from an early date for instruction, and to the last it was from nature alone that he drew his best inspirations.

The town in which he was born, Castelfranco Veneto, situated in the valley of the Musone, at about an equal distance from the Alps and from the Adriatic, adjoins one of the most picturesque parts of Italy.

The master has given exact and poetical expression to all the various beauties of this delightful country.

Giorgione was no sooner ensconced at Venice than his precocious maturity at once won public favour. There were plenty of churches to be decorated, and for a long time the walls of public buildings

offered artists huge spaces on which to celebrate the glory of the city. Religious belief had lost some of its fervour, and great military feats were becoming rarer. Among literary people, those somewhat subtle pastorals, in which refined civilisations delight, had come into fashion again. The texts of the old writers, Virgil, Ovid, Theocritus and Longus, were the subject of those publications of poets like Sannazaro, who celebrated the graces of an imaginary Arcadia.

Giorgione, who was never a great scholar, was better inspired, for he went directly to nature for his subjects, and, for his own satisfaction, he gave it an ever-increasing importance in his works. He lived in Venice, but he loved to revisit the little spot where he had passed his childhood, and whenever he could spare the time he returned to his beloved horizons. He knew his native country well enough to be able to choose the subjects that were most characteristic of it. Everything there interested him. He delighted in the trees, the gaiety of the villages perched on the slopes, and the clear, rapid streamlets descending from the mountains in cascades. The painter had a special liking for these

Annibale Carracci,
The Fishing, c.1585-1588.
Oil on canvas, 136 x 255 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Correggio (Antonio Allegri),
Allegory of Vices, c.1530.
Tempera on canvas, 142 x 85.5 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.





running waters. Light seemed to him, as to Leonardo, the very soul of a landscape.

Usually it was the full light of day which was to be seen shining brightly in the pictures of this master. The general tone is powerful, and the breadth of execution, the richness of colour, and the splendour of all the harmonies are in accordance with the dignified rhythm of line and the beautiful proportions of the whole.

This nature exudes an impression of happiness and of poetic rusticity. Simple though they seemed, his compositions contain enigmas which have frequently exercised the intelligence of the critic and called forth the most far-fetched explanations. Let us take, for instance, the picture known as *The Tempest*. There is a young woman almost naked, crouching down in the grass, at the edge of a stream, giving the breast to her child. To the left, in the foreground, on the other bank of the stream, a young man is leaning on his stick. In the centre, surrounded by tall trees, is another little stream, over which is a wooden bridge, and, farther away, standing out clearly against a sombre sky, in which is the zigzag of a flash of lightning, are houses and the towers and walls of a castle. The likelihood of thunder, the two lonely human beings, one dressed and the other naked, have given rise to innumerable hypotheses, most people seeing in this composition a symbol of human life and of the unforeseen misfortunes which at any moment may burst upon it. It has also been suggested that the explanation of the subject is probably quite simple and much less subtle. If the title of the picture is correct and by comparing it with a photograph or Castelfranco, as it now is, it will be seen that the picture certainly resembles the entrance to this town. This proud-looking youth is the artist himself watching over his wife who on a sultry, stormy day, has come to retire at this spot to take a cool bath. Her little one, who has been lying on the grass, has roused up, and the mother at once appeases the child's hunger. Charmed by this homely ideal, the artist has wished to immortalise it in this picture.

The composition of *The Astronomers* has given rise to interpretations still more far-fetched and complex. The various titles of *The Philosophers*, *The Geometricians*, and *The Three Magi*, etc., show that the subject of it has never been very clear. Nothing can be said with regard to *The Pastoral Concert*, one of the masterpieces of the Louvre, as this beautiful work is beyond all criticism and beyond all comprehension. How can the presence of these two nude women in the open country be explained, in company with the fine-looking, well-dressed young noble, playing his guitar whilst talking to his rustic blond-haired neighbour? With the most open effrontery, the two maidens, the



Giovanni Bellini,

The Agony in the Garden, c.1465.

Egg tempera on wood, 81.3 x 127 cm.

The National Gallery, London.

Giorgione (Giorgio Barbarelli da Castelfranco),

The Three Philosophers, 1508-1509.

Oil on canvas, 123.8 x 144.5 cm

Gemäldegalerie, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Vienna.





Titian (Tiziano Vecellio),
Sacred and Profane Love, c.1514.
Oil on canvas, 118 x 279 cm.
Galleria Borghese, Rome.



Titian (Tiziano Vecellio),
The Pastoral Concert, c.1509.
Oil on canvas, 105 x 137 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Giorgione (Giorgio Barbarelli da Castelfranco),
The Tempest, c.1507.
Oil on canvas, 82 x 73 cm.
Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice.

one plump and massive, the other elegant and superbly beautiful, display their charms to all eyes, whilst a young herdsman, a few paces away, leads his flock along and does not appear at all astonished at so strange a sight. What chance could have brought together persons of such different rank, costume, and appearance? Mythology has nothing to do with this, and, certainly, even in those far distant times of less scrupulous morality, such outdoor exhibitions would not have been tolerated without scandal. Nevertheless the picture is decent and has no suggestion of vulgarity. We are here in a dream country, and, with realism as powerful as it is poetic, the great artist has allowed us to share the vision of a beautiful autumn afternoon as pictured by his imagination. It is no use trying to find out who these people are. The only thing to do is to revel with them in the charms of this fascinating country, and to enjoy the exquisite harmony of these human figures with the grace of a landscape specially composed for them.

The Pastoral Concert gives us the idea that we should retain of this master better than any of his other works. It gives us an idea, too, of his gentle, innocent soul and of his powerful, yet delicate, style.

Titian was destined to surpass his predecessors, including, even, Giorgione, and to realise their noblest aspirations. He was born around 1490 and died in 1576 and, during his long career saw the commencement of the Venetian school and its decline. He himself marks the zenith of its glory, being the most complete and brilliant.

Owing to his universality, he was able to express himself in all branches of art, and to all of them he added something new. On account of the place he gave to nature in his works, he may be considered the veritable creator of modern landscape painting, and on this account he commands our special attention.

The little town of Pieve di Cadore, his birthplace, is built against one of the lesser chains of the Carnic Alps. The highest peaks of the mountains rise in the form of a majestic amphitheatre above the little town, whilst the turbulent, foamy Piave makes its way with great difficulty through the sunken rocks.

Brought up amid such rugged scenes, the young man's precocious vocation was encouraged by his family, and, at an early age, he was sent to Venice to serve his apprenticeship as a painter. Sebastiano Zuccato taught him the elements of the art of mosaics,



Landscape Painting

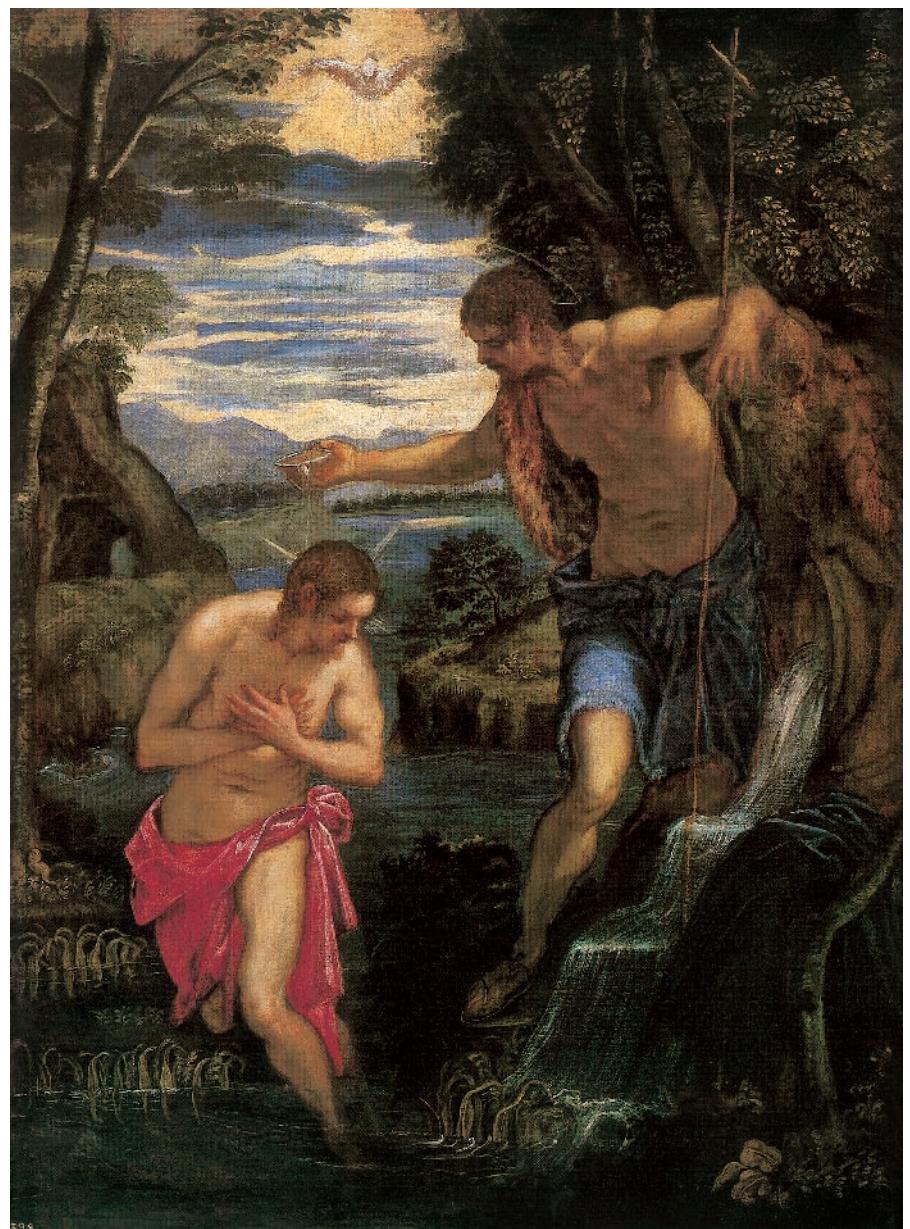


Titian (Tiziano Vecellio),
Bacchus and Ariadne, 1520-1523.
Oil on canvas, 176.5 x 191 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

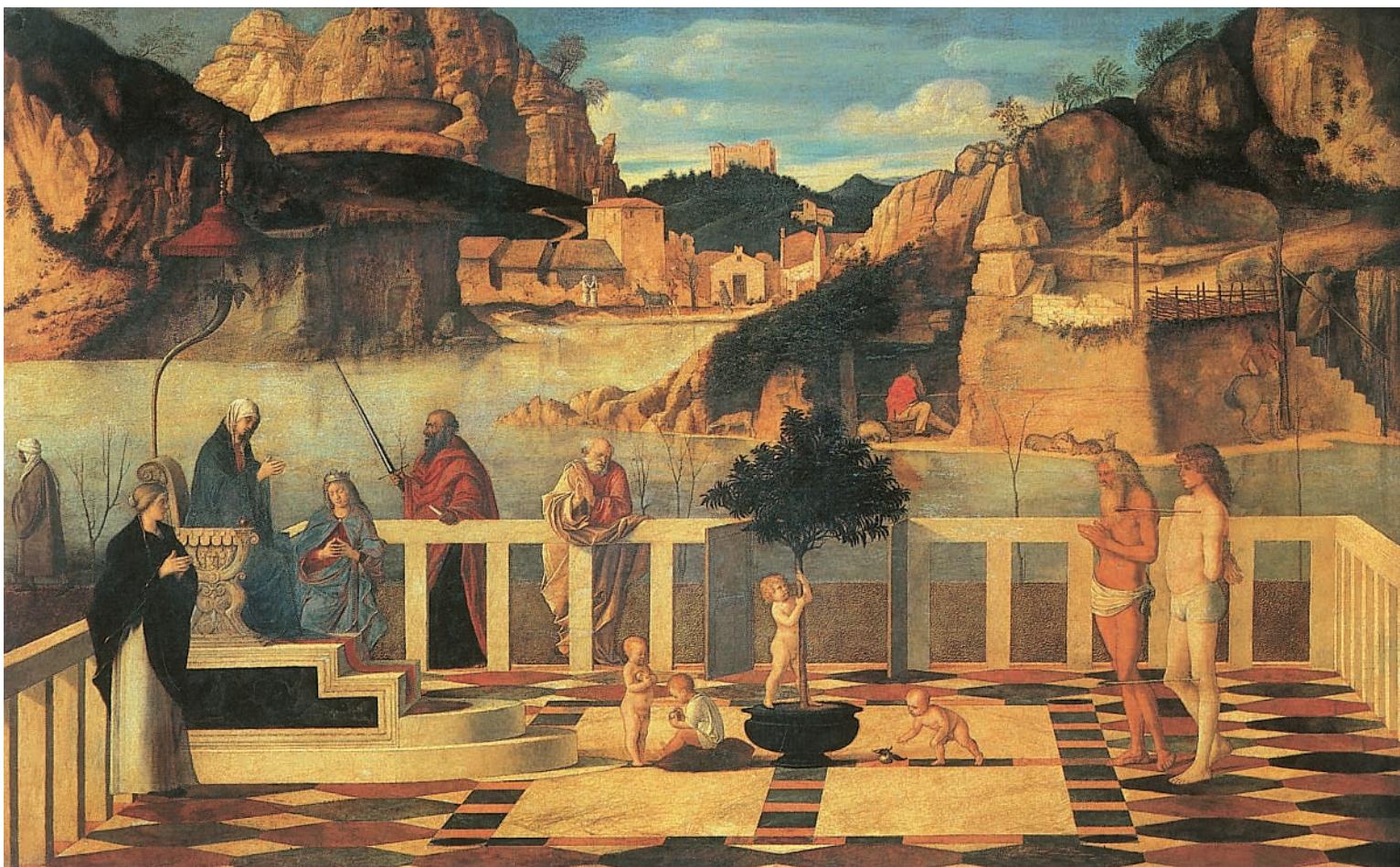
and he adopted a certain breadth of style, which is evident in his frescoes and can be seen in all his work. The teaching which he subsequently received from Gentile and Giovanni Bellini enabled him to soon add to it the wonderful finish of execution which distinguishes his early pictures. But the influence of Giorgione, his young comrade and rival, was destined to do more towards his development than that of these two masters. Like Giorgione, he loved nature passionately and, while understanding the grandeur of it, also admired it in its smallest details. One of his early works, known as *Sacred and Profane Love*, proves both his love of nature and the great influence exercised over him by Giorgione. In this charming work, everything, including the very indecision of the title, reveals the similarities that the talent and taste of these two artists offered at the commencement of their careers. But this was only a momentary period in the long existence of the painter. His starting-point was always the direct study of reality. He soon discovered how to choose from the most characteristic features, those which appealed most to him and to the character of the episode he intended to paint. It is by his sense of life and the picturesque that his originality is especially striking, and it is in consequence of this that he imparts freshness to every subject he touches. With Titian, not only is the role of the scenery important, but it is a striking commentary on the dramatic setting to which it serves. Religious subjects supplied Titian with peaceful and dramatic idylls.

Mythological subjects gave this great artist more scope for manifesting his originality as such subjects were more in accordance with his own temperament. For a long time the school of central Italy had been addicted to portraying the legends of fable. Instead of the set compositions in which his predecessors introduced the pieces of information they had been able to collect, Titian went to the very source of these old legends in order to revive them. To him they were eternally fresh, because they appeared to him as ever existing emblems of the energies, the splendours or the graces of nature. It was nature itself that inspired him, and its forms, colours, and harmonies, studied directly, and then depicted and idealised by his genius, give more truth and poetry still to his interpretations. Taking, in this way, subjects that were real, his vivid imagination transposed them freely and intelligently. But it was all nature that supplied him with his subjects, and he would never have been satisfied to take from his own country alone the picturesque elements that he introduces so lavishly in his compositions.

Some occasional resemblance between a certain landscape of Titian's and some aspects of his natural locality were always very vague. We found reminiscences rather than portraits. This district,



Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti),
The Baptism of the Christ.
Oil on canvas, 137 x 105 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

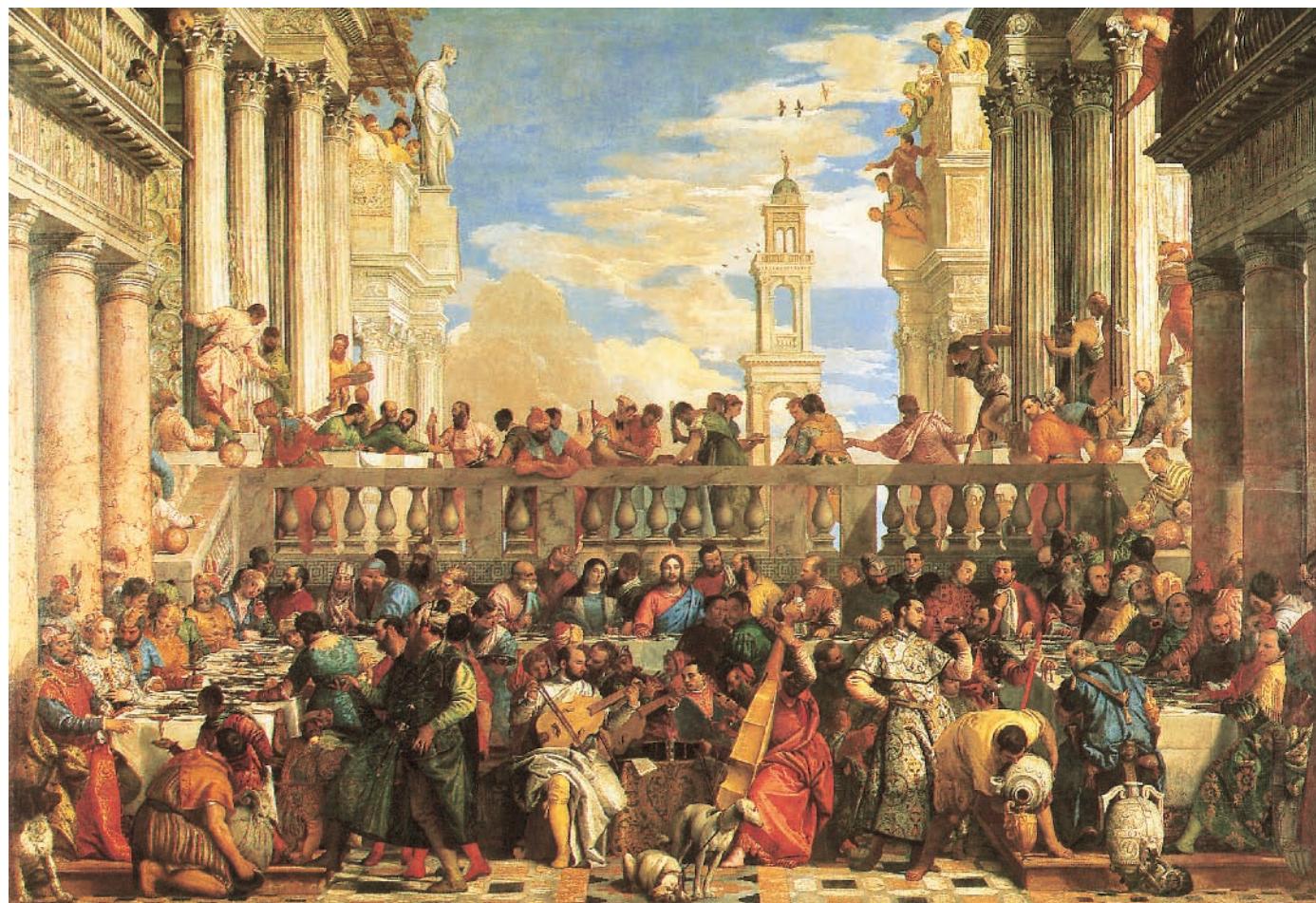


shut in by high mountains, has rather a wild Alpine look, such as one never sees in Titian's pictures. He has never given us the weird aspect of some of these peaks, with their jagged summits and the snow with which they are crowned. We see these sometimes in his drawings, particularly in the *Rape of Europa*. These are scenes that he probably noticed when travelling, and remembered; but he does not introduce them into his paintings. Throughout his whole life he never failed to return, at short intervals, to his native town. On returning from Venice, Titian saw other districts with more varied scenery, richer and more suitable for human habitation, and consequently more likely pleasing to him. When about half-way, near Ceneda and Serravalle, he could see, looking towards the Alps, the most picturesque of perspectives, with cultivated valleys, beautiful trees and the sea. This must have seemed an ideal district, as here was everything that is needed to lend charm to a landscape.

Giovanni Bellini,
Sacred Allegory, 1490-1499.
Oil on wood, 73 x 119 cm.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

One of Titian's merits, one of the signs of his genius and of the sureness of his taste, was that he avoided the extreme peculiarities, and eccentricities of nature; the Dolomites, for instance, or the fantastic rocks which tempted his predecessors, even Leonardo da Vinci himself. His great preoccupation was with order and harmony instead of the rare or curious things that would immediately attract the eye and detract from what he considered the essential, preferring subjects more suitable to the episodes he was treating and to the impression he wished to produce.

From *Jupiter and Antiope*, *Bacchanals*, *The Worship of Venus*, and from many of Titian's other works, we can judge the variety and the breadth of his mythological compositions. The details are all so natural and so exact, that it seems as though the artist must have been a witness of the scene, and that, with his usual skill and spirit, he had just taken a sketch of it with his ready pencil. The magnificence of Titian's invention has never been more evident than in the famous *Bacchus and Ariadne*. In this picture he has accumulated around the principal group all the splendours of nature suggested by his powerful imagination. In this radiant country everything seems to tell of the joyful exuberance of life. Under a deep blue sky can be seen vast perspectives of distant



shores, with rocks here and there, shady trees, and winding creeks, where, as they die away, the idle waves leave a silvery band of foam. There are bluebells, anemones, and wild irises growing among the grass, and, in the foreground, we see the vine clinging lovingly to the trunks of the slender trees. Wherever we look everything is gay and harmonious. The gilding of the chariot and the golden colouring of the animals bring out the blues of the sky, mountains, and sea. A note of pale pink and of rich purple is given by the drapery floating in the breeze. The execution, always so lifelike and sure, lends an added charm of spontaneity to the beauty of this masterpiece.

In spite of Titian's ever-increasing fame, he always reserved his best time for work. Charles V conferred a title upon him, and, as time passed, he was in great favour with Philip II, Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, the Duke of Mantua, and even Pope Paul III. All tried to keep him at their Court, but he preferred his independence, his home and his work, to all such grandeur. Like Giorgione and many other great painters, he delighted in music. It was, perhaps, only by chance that Paolo Veronese represented him playing a violoncello in the foreground of the *Marriage at Cana*.

The portraits painted by Titian would form a complete gallery of the celebrities of his times. In most of them a considerable place is given to nature. He has painted pictures in all styles and with equal ability, but in them all he assigns the chief place to nature. The old memoires mention his landscapes, which cannot be discovered anywhere, and Titian himself, in a letter to Philip II in 1552, informs the King that he has sent him one of these landscapes. In any case, on account of his great love of nature and his skilful interpretation of it, Titian deserves to be considered as the creator, or, as several historians of art have styled him, the Homer of landscape painting. In his immense number of pictures he has shown the infinite variety of nature. He has depicted the ever-changing aspects of every season, of every hour of the day, of all effects of light and shade, and of the various phenomena of atmosphere.

Veronese (Paolo Veronese),

The Wedding Feast at Cana (Noces de Cana) (detail of Titian as cello player),

c.1562-1563.

Oil on canvas, 677 x 994 cm.

Musée du Louvre, Paris.





Landscape Painting

Titian's glory has only increased with time. His influence has been felt through the ages and by a variety of artists. Rubens, not content with admiring him and collecting his works, was never tired of copying him. The Carracci, Poussin, Watteau, and Gainsborough, were all greatly influenced by him. No other artist of the Venetian school has had either his universality or his ability. Important as he considered it, landscape painting was only one phase of his genius. With one of his disciples, Domenico Campagnola, whose drawings, though very inferior, have sometimes been mistaken for Titian's, landscape became a special branch.

Some of the pupils and imitators of Titian gave a large place to landscape in their pictures.

Two other masters deserve special mention, as, after Titian, they kept up the fame of the Venetian school. Jacopo Robusti, called Tintoretto (c. 1518-1594), a pupil of Titian's, was one of these, and Paolo Caliari (1528-1588), who took the name of Veronese from his birthplace, was the other.

Tintoretto's originality is to be seen in that wonderful masterpiece entitled the *Miracle of St. Mark*. The scenery lends additional charm to the prodigious wealth of the colouring. A bolder and more harmonious unison can scarcely be imagined than that of this sky of intense and luminous blue, with the architecture lit up by the sunshine and serving as a background for the dazzling apparition of the saint.

Tintoretto's execution is usually just as rough and spirited as the whole treatment of Veronese is quiet and sober, with light colour and delicate gradation of tones. Following the traditions of Carpaccio, but with a better knowledge of art, Veronese transposed religious subjects according to his Venetian taste. He paid so little regard to orthodoxy that the Inquisition, usually somewhat lax in Venice, called him to account.

His smaller pictures are perhaps superior to his large compositions. In the former he has given some of the most characteristic aspects of Venice in the most charmingly poetic manner. Not only did the city itself supply him with elements for the most decorative subjects imaginable, but he also found a way of evoking memories of Venice and of its brilliant past. Leaning over a balustrade, or against a marble pillar, we see, in his pictures, beautiful Venetians. Quite apart from the other schools of Italy, the Venetian school kept its distinct existence and its own peculiar characteristics to the very end.

Its perfection was reached with Bellini, Giorgione, and Titian, and its traditions were continued by such masters as Tintoretto and

Veronese. The decorative sense, derived from nature itself, was a tradition in this school, and was kept up, until the fall of the Republic, by the marvellous compositions of Tiepolo (1696-1770). At the same time, and as though to complete the cycle of its transformations, the Venetian school, before disappearing, produced two landscapists, Canal and Guardi, almost the only ones to whom Italy has given birth. Antonio Canal (1697-1768) did not follow the example of his predecessors in their free interpretation of nature. In his pictures he gives us aspects which are either quite true to nature, or where he has modified the arrangement, the elements themselves have been taken from reality. After her inspired poets and singers, Venice found in him her portraitist. In his numerous pictures, we see Venice as it was. The works of this able artist are easily recognised by their well-drawn architecture, their full, bold colouring, the faultlessness of the handling and the sureness of the technique.

Francesco Guardi (1712-1793) was a pupil of Antonio Canal's. He was born in Venice and, like Canal, drew his best inspirations from his native city. In his pictures his brush is lighter and more alert than that of his master. His colouring is less rich, but his light is cleverly indicated by touches of paint from a full brush. But his work has not the absolute correctness of Canal's. In several of his pictures errors of perspective can be found and somewhat doubtful proportions with regard to the buildings. Architecture, however, does not always occupy the primary position in his compositions. He delights in religious or official ceremonies, as such subjects gave him the opportunity of painting a seething crowd of people of all kinds; courtesans and idlers, masked people and noble lords, dignitaries of the Church, sailors, boatmen, etc.; a whole world of people dressed in festive attire, whose lives appear to be a perpetual festival. It was in the midst of these constant spectacles and amusements that Venice was to lose her independence and her art. Unfortunately, together with its own peculiar life, Venice has lost its school, that school which was its greatest glory, and which was so closely connected with all the vicissitudes of its strange existence.

Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal),

View of the Grand Canal.

Oil on canvas.

The Barnes Foundation, Merion (Pennsylvania).

(p. 28-29)

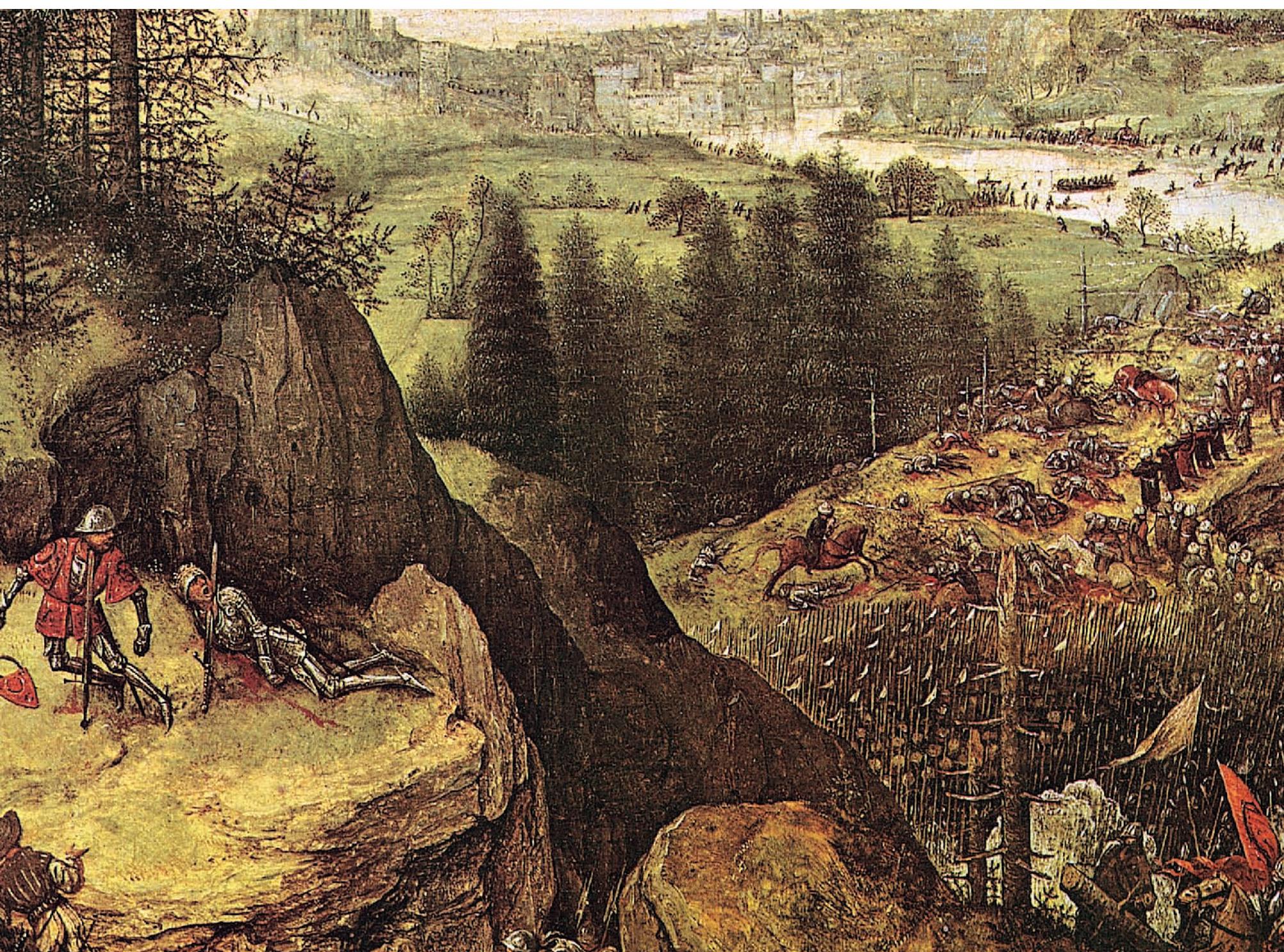
Francesco Guardi,

Departure of Bucentaure towards the Lido of Venice on Ascension day, c.1775-1780.

Oil on canvas, 66 x 101 cm.

Musée du Louvre, Paris.





Chapter 2

Landscape in the Flemish and German Schools





Pieter Bruegel the Elder,
The Suicide of Saul (detail), 1562.
Oil on oak, 33.5 x 55 cm.
Gemäldegalerie, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Vienna.
(p. 32-33)

Jan van Eyck,
The Adoration of the Mystical Lamb or *The Ghent Altarpiece*, 1432.
Oil on panel, 350 x 461 cm (opened); 350 x 223 cm (closed),
Cathedral of Saint Bavo, Ghent.

The Flemish School

The Miniaturists

Like in Italy at the beginning of the Renaissance, painting only developed in Northern Europe after architecture and sculpture. It is in these two branches of art, therefore, that we must look for the first traces of a direct study of picturesque nature. Though at first consigned to the dark aisles of cathedrals, painting gradually began to be seen above the altars in the coloured sections of multifold pictures. Slow though the progress was, the stiff, set types which ignorance, rather than ecclesiastical rule, had assigned to sacred figures unconsciously began to be transformed. Life, with all its different meanings, now animated these pictures with which the simple piety of preceding ages had been satisfied, and the principal cause of this innovation was the portrait. Together with the sacred scenes presented to believers, we see here and there a few figures, generally of smaller size and somewhat in the background, invoking divine protection. These figures are the donors of the pictures, and, to flatter them and also to prove his own ability, the painter took pains to make the resemblance as exact as possible. The artist introduced into the picture a view of the surrounding country with its certain characteristics, such as its streams of water or the trees and plants peculiar to it. Not only did he honour in this way those who employed him, but he extended his own field of study.

Illuminated manuscripts, however, were the cause of the most marked progress in the representation of landscape. On attentively studying the miniatures of this time, the variety to be found in them is astonishing. There were many honest, conscientious, patient labourers, of doubtful taste and second-rate ability who, sparing neither their eyes nor their time, devoted themselves absolutely to their work. There were also many true artists who freely lavished their treasures of invention, of skill, and of poetry on productions more often than not anonymous and restricted to a very small space. These artists were chiefly, often exclusively, dependent on the flora of the country in which they lived for the decorative motives of the margins of their missals and breviaries.

Such work was no doubt fascinating, but the miniaturist did not allow himself to be completely absorbed by these small details. More interesting work still was proposed to him, and when, in the calendars that usually formed the headings of the prayer books, he took up the series of those rustic scenes that sculptors had formerly tried to reproduce on the walls of cathedrals, he was able to represent them with all the importance possible. From page to page the different months are before us with the occupations



Jan van Eyck,
The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin, c.1435.
Oil on panel, 66 x 62 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

peculiar to each, while every picture gives us the ever-changing scenery of nature, thus enabling us to follow the ceaseless transformations of the year. Gradually, in spite of the small dimensions of their works and the limited means at their disposal, the miniaturists succeeded in giving a strange poetry and truthfulness to their representations of landscape. It was just when oil painting was becoming more generally employed, and when printing, which was to bring about the disappearance of their art, was just discovered, that these miniaturists shone most brilliantly.

Several of them, certainly, after being initiated into the new methods, continued to exercise their talent as illuminators and had great influence over the rapid development of painting. But there were other circumstances which brought about the sudden and marvellous perfection of this art, the first being the genius of the Van Eyck brothers.

Although it has never been possible to obtain any exact information on this point, it is probable that the two brothers belonged to a family of artists. The country of their birth was, at that time, one of the richest in Europe, and, as regards civilisation, one of the most advanced. At Liege, in the service of Bishop John of Bavaria, and at the Court of Burgundy where they had been summoned by Philip the Good, the van Eycks were soon in great favour. On the death of his elder brother, Hubert (c. 1390-1426), Jan (c. 1391-1441), who was then in his maturity, was able to spend a whole year in Portugal and to visit the North of Spain in consequence of a mission with which his master had charged him (1428-1429). On returning to Bruges, he received many proofs of the appreciation of Philip the Good. In 1432, he exhibited, at Ghent, that *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* which his brother had designed and he had finished. His contemporaries hailed this picture as the most perfect work that Northern art had hitherto produced.

If we were only to speak of the representation of nature, as understood by the Van Eycks, we should have to acknowledge the greatness and originality of their genius. Their whole work is excellent, but the most striking example of it is given in that wonderful *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. Whilst giving the necessary importance to the personages in this picture, landscape is not neglected. It remains subordinate to the composition, and it contributes to that character of unity which is so striking. In that crowd, hurrying from all parts towards the centre, the arrangement of the groups, the general disposition of the lines, the attitudes and gestures of the figures; all compel us to look at the mystic lamb. The landscape which serves as a background to this grand poem completes the significance of the composition in the happiest way. The mountains and passes traversed by the processions end in

undulating meadow, in the midst of which the divine symbol, placed on an altar, is presented to the adoration of the faithful. Forming a double group, angels and believers are kneeling around the lamb, encircling him with their affections, whilst beyond are the hills, and in the gaps between these can be seen the bluish perspectives of the horizon. All classes of humanity and all the representatives of the celestial hierarchy are to be seen here together. By the side of this picture of spiritual life, the artist gives us a picture of the universe with its mountains and plains, its woods and its meadows, the water of its rivers, and the aridity of its deserts; with its towns, and its solitudes, the richness of its Southern flora, covered with blossom or fruit, and the vegetations of various lands.

On looking at this prodigious work, one feels the presence of a superior mind, but elevated as is the conception, one feels that it is also interpreted by a painter. An intelligent love of reality is manifested in the execution of all the details. The myriads of flowers studded in the thick grass have their separate import and expression. They all contribute to the beautification of that delicate grassy carpet, whose soft green contrasts with the startling reds of the costumes of the various personages. The exotic vegetation is studied with the same conscientiousness. The artist does not display this Southern flora which he has borrowed for the mere sake of attracting attention. Here there are none of the eccentricities peculiar to those travellers of all times who make the most of their excursions and of the extraordinary things they may have seen. Although the landscape is an imaginary one composed of heterogeneous elements, it looks real, and its main lines as well as its general harmony give it logical unity. The drawing is extremely true and striking. Without conventionality, it draws its strength, variety, and correctness from reality. The perspective, as regards the essential rules, is astonishingly correct for that period. The question is whether the Van Eycks formulated their own rules, whether they received them from those who had preceded them, or whether, with their keen understanding, they discovered the laws for themselves in their conscientious consultations with nature. It would be difficult to decide this; but we must admit that their knowledge of perspective was very thorough.

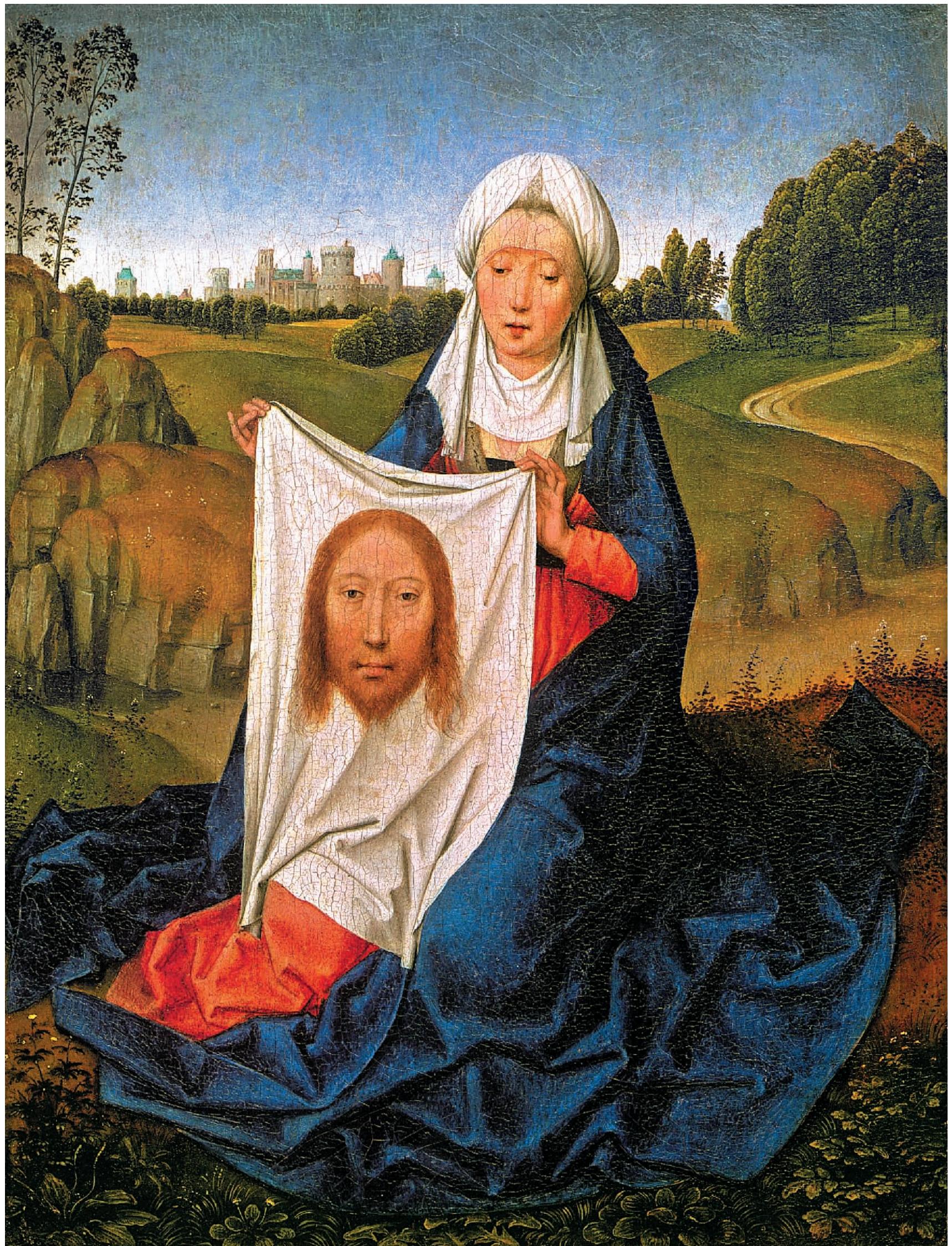
If Jan van Eyck was not alone responsible for this immense piece of work, he certainly did the greater part of it. Far from being

Hans Memling,

St Veronica (Triptych of Jan Floreins, reverse), c. 1470-1475.

Oil on panel, 30.3 x 22.8 cm.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.





exhausted by this task, he soon afterwards gave proof of his prolific talent by other works which prove even more the originality and flexibility of his genius.

The excellence of the Van Eycks is most evident when they are compared with their predecessors. It is none the less striking when they are compared with the painters who succeeded them. The charm of naturalness, the force and frankness of expression which we admire in them, is not to be met with in the same

Gerard David,

Triptych of the Sedano Family (left wing: *Jean de Sedano and his son*; central panel: *The Virgin and Child between Angel Musicians*; right wing: *Marie, wife of Jean de Sedano, with St John the Evangelist*, c.1490-1495.
Oil on wood, 97 x 72 cm (central panel); 91 x 30 cm (shutters). Paris.

degree in the period that followed. They seemed to reach perfection at once, and to fix with decisive authority the limits of their art. With them and their immediate successors, Rogier van der Weyden (c.1399-1464) and Hans Memling (c.1430-1494), terminates that initial period of Flemish art in all its freshness. The impressions it interpreted were honestly felt, and there was no touch of conventionalism to modify its frankness. Subsequently the very genius of these early masters hampered their successors and paralysed the originality of their talent. Whether they yielded to involuntary reminiscences, or whether, on the contrary, they tried to refrain from following the example of their predecessors, an unconscious mannerism crept into their works and gave them a somewhat affected and artificial character. Following Gerard David's example, some of his contemporaries were induced to attempt a too detailed imitation of nature, whilst others endeavoured



to seek for themselves new paths in the domain of the fantastic and marvellous. Hieronymus van Aken (c.1450-1516), better known as Bosch, is celebrated for his *Temptations*, *Hells*, and the diabolical visions which were his specialty, but his originality is evident when he restricts himself to the representations of nature. In one of his most remarkable works, the triptych entitled *The Adoration of the Magi*, the landscape, which stretches away beyond the cradle, is rendered with great detail.

By the firmness of the drawing and the truthfulness of the colour, he has expressed very forcibly the character of one of those wild districts, whose poetry had not hitherto tempted the brush of his predecessors. A stream of water, overhung by beautiful trees, is to be seen, and, farther away, uncultivated land sparsely covered with grass.

In time the taste for painting gradually became more general throughout the Netherlands, but, attracted by the ever-increasing prestige of the Italian Renaissance, Flemish artists began to cross the mountains in search of their idyll and to complete their education. As a result of this migration toward the South we see the originality of the old national art of the Netherlands gradually disappear. By coming into contact with foreign art, it lost that sincerity which had been its great force. All attempts to conciliate aspirations so contrary, notwithstanding the talent of those who

Hieronymus Bosch,
The Adoration of the Magi, c.1495.
Oil on wood, 138 x 138 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

Landscape Painting



made them, resulted in hybrid productions devoid both of style and naturalness.

Nevertheless, the name of Bernard van Orley deserves to be remembered among the painters we have just mentioned. After his return from Italy his talent certainly developed and was unique unto himself. But it is not in his pictures that we must look for the best proofs of his originality as a landscapist. Van Orley was a decorator of the first rank and, together with his designs for the beautiful St. Gudule windows, those of several series of tapestries, particularly Maximilian's hunting scenes, deserves mention for the breadth with which the landscape is treated. In the series of the *Twelve Months*, some panels of which are in the Louvre, there are various hunting episodes which give a faithful picture of the country around Brussels, Soignies Forest, Tervuren, Septfontaines, with the castles, convents, pools, or rivers in the neighbourhood. The plants and shrubs skilfully grouped in the foreground of these compositions testify to a scrupulous study of the local flora, which has also furnished the motives of the designs of the borders. But such exactness is quite exceptional with the Flemish painters of this period.

We must mention Joachim Patenier, who was for a long time regarded by critics as the inventor of landscape painting as a separate branch of art sufficient in itself. Of him, who is said to have been Herri met de Bles' master, many fables have been told. There is, however, nothing among the few certain dates and facts that we know of his life to justify the reputation for drunkenness and disorder attributed to him by certain chroniclers. He went at an early age to live in Antwerp, and in 1515 was a member of the Guild there. Albrecht Dürer, who was travelling in the Netherlands, was present at his induction, which took place in 1521. Dürer was celebrated greatly by Patenier, who appreciated the young artist's talent. As a souvenir of his visit, Dürer not only painted his portrait, but also left him several sketches of little figures for his compositions.

Patenier frequently placed his brush at the service of his fellow artists. He was one of the first to set the example of those collaborations which subsequently became so frequent. For several of his fellow artists he painted the backgrounds of their pictures. His ability and also his care and conscientiousness in the execution of his work would serve, if necessary, to refute the accusations against him.

The district in which Patenier was born no doubt contributed to develop his love of nature. He was surrounded by somewhat weird scenery but well calculated to delight a landscapist of those times.



Joachim Patinir,
Landscape with St Jerome, 1516-1517.
Oil on wood, 74 x 91 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.
(p. 40)

Geertgen tot Sint Jans,
Saint John the Baptist in the Desert, c.1490.
Oil on wood, 42 x 28 cm.
Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder,
Parable of the Blind Men, 1568.
Tempera on canvas, 85.5 x 154 cm.
Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples.
(p. 42-43)





The situation of Dinant on the banks of the Meuse; the rapid course of the river, and such variety of scenery within so restricted a space, was just what the painters of that period delighted to depict. Far from endeavouring to simplify this already complex nature, Patenier seems to deliberately add to its strangeness by the crowd of heterogeneous details that he brings together. We have the sea; steep mountains; lonely, inaccessible rocks crowned by towns or dwellings; perspectives which stretch out on every side, and streams of water. In spite of this packing-in of detail, he does not appear to consider that landscape can be of sufficient interest alone to make it the exclusive subject of his pictures. He thinks it necessary to introduce episodes into them, but he restricts, more than his predecessors, the number of his figures. These supply him with titles. Thus we have the *Baptism of Christ* and other episodes that his predecessors had already treated and which, for long afterwards, were painted by his successors.

Patenier, therefore, was certainly not an innovator. He attempted, with more success than anyone else up to that date, to increase the importance of landscape and to reduce that of the figures, though without eliminating them entirely. He was the first to adopt that systematic distribution of the three tones which is to be seen in his landscapes; the warm brown for the foreground to give relief, the more or less decided greens for the less important parts, and the blue for the distances. This distribution, in accordance with the laws of aerial perspective, lends itself to pretty contrasts. For a long time Flemish landscapists, no doubt following the example of the Venetians, had recourse to this method of obtaining effect which Patenier had inaugurated. We find traces of this method, more or less disguised, in all of them, and the exaggerated use of so simple an expedient gives a certain monotony to their work.

With the landscapists of the close of the sixteenth century, this defect is more particularly noticeable. It is to be seen in the works of Jan Bruegel the Elder. Another cause of uniformity which lessens the value of these artists is the choice of their favourite subjects. We have *Earthly Paradise*, *The Tower of Babel*, *The Deluge*, *The Massacre of the Innocents*, *Orpheus Charming the Animals*, *Fairs*, *Battles*, etc; all subjects which allow the artist to increase the number of his figures and animals at pleasure. They yielded to this current of routine and vogue with an almost submissive ease. The history of art gives us only too many instances of this kind. Instead of trying to find direct and individual inspirations in the country around them, most of them went to other lands, particularly to Italy, in search of impressions which were necessarily superficial and confused. Landscape painting of such a kind is purely decorative, and its various aspects, insufficiently characterised, are not calculated to appeal to us.

The Bruegels, Rubens and Teniers

Notwithstanding the decadence of Italy, its prestige in the outside world was continually increasing. In the Netherlands more particularly, the emigration movement could not fail to find favour with artists, for their own country was disturbed at that time, and they not only hoped for an easier life there, but had the prospect of a world-famed artistic education. On leaving their Flemish plains, whose monotony is only broken by a few insignificant undulations, the sight of the magnificently picturesque countries through which they passed naturally made a great impression upon them. Amazed and charmed as they all were, there were nevertheless some among them who were so deeply attached to their own country that, after a certain time, refusing to yield to the fascination which kept many of their fellow artists in Italy, they hurried back to their native land. Among these was Bruegel, one of the most curious and characteristic figures of his time.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder was born around 1530; he belonged to a peasant family, which took its name from a Brabant village near Breda. He preserved, both in his talent and in his choice of subjects, the rustic stamp to the end of his career. He must, no doubt, have given proof at an early age of his artistic inclinations, since his parents, without making any difficulty, allowed him to pursue the calling he had chosen. He was apprenticed at Antwerp to an artist who was celebrated at that time, Pieter Coecke, a man who had travelled in the East and who had studied sculpture and architecture as well as painting. Bruegel also took lessons from Jerome Cock, better known as an engraver, who had an important business selling prints.

Like his two masters, almost as soon as he was free, young Bruegel, who had been made a member of the Guild of St. Luke in 1551, was drawn into the current which had carried his fellow artists away to Italy. He went through France, and, as the inscription of one of his engravings proves, he was in Rome in 1553.

Bruegel, however, did not stay long in Italy. Both his education and his tastes induced him to return to his own country. He must have been back in Flanders in 1553. In this picture we have a crowd of people of every age and rank, frolicking on the frozen trenches of the city of Antwerp. The artist was at home again among his fellow countrymen. He was a friend of peasants and liked to live among them. He was interested in their work, was present at their holiday-makings, and painted them just as he saw them: unembellished, heavy and awkward, knowing nothing of the graces of life, with sunburnt complexions and rough, unshapely hands. Bruegel scrupulously placed his rustic



Pieter Bruegel the Elder,
The Massacre of the Innocents, 1565/1567.
Oil on oak, 116 x 160 cm.
Gemäldegalerie, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Vienna.



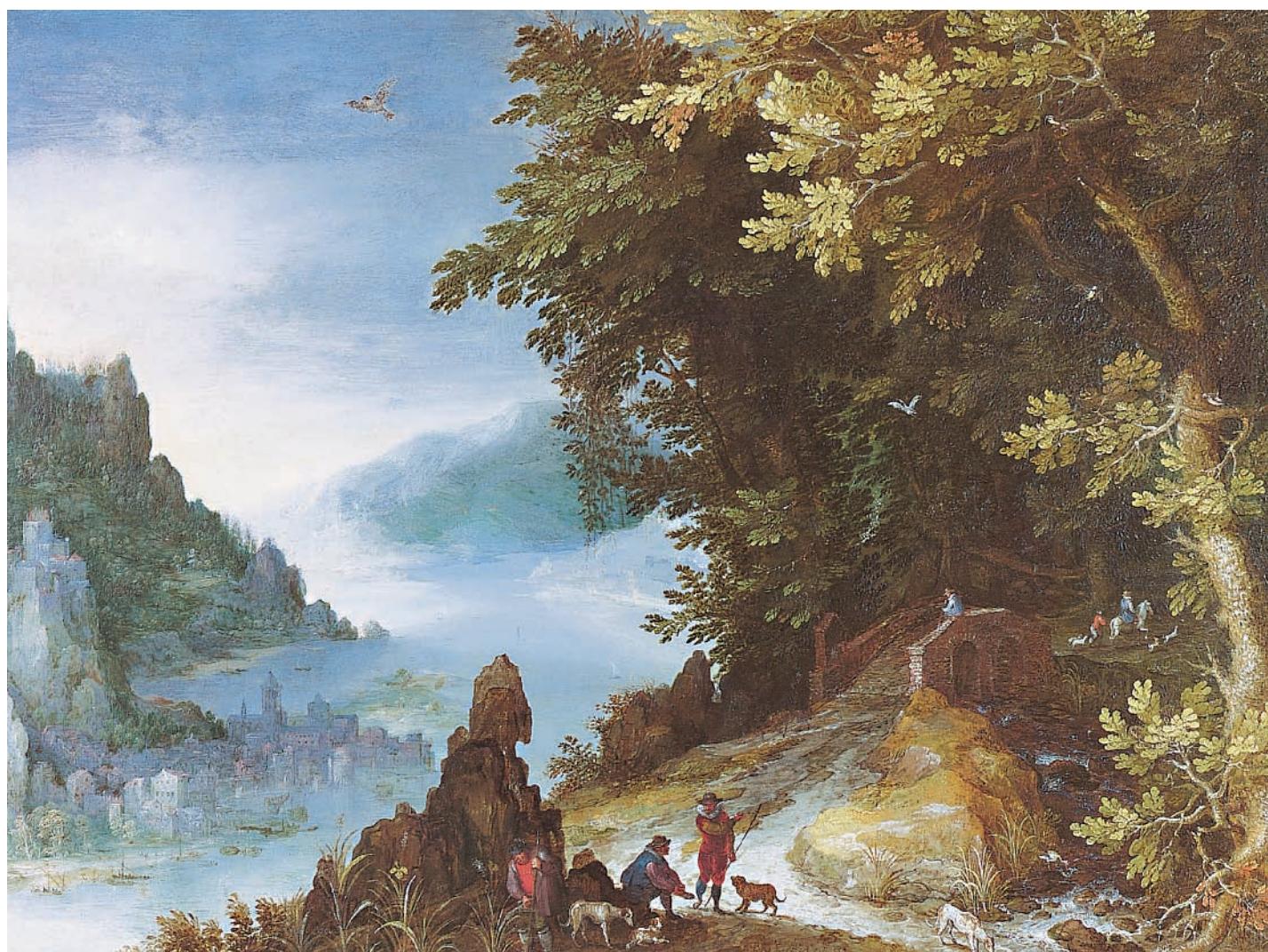
figures in their own surroundings. Behind them is the country where they live, with their simple cottages and familiar horizons. We find all this in the *Peasants Quarrelling*, and in the subjects taken from the Bible, which he transposed into a Flemish style. There is *The Massacre of the Innocents*, to which the sombre sky of a snowy day gives an additional note of sadness, and the Parable of the Blind. Both of these pictures are masterpieces. The peaceful nook, which is the scene of the latter episode, is rendered by the artist with as much truth as poetry. The fresh green of the meadows, the light and depth of the silvery sky, the humble air of the village and of its little church, the low hill which shuts out the horizon, the streamlet towards which the blind people are winding their way with uncertain steps, are all well thought out and expressed. He has no regard for acknowledged

conventions and his work is marked by the originality of the conception, the confidence of drawing, and the strength and delicacy of colouring.

Bruegel was greatly respected for his character and appreciated for his talent. Owing to his industry and to the fact that his productions included all kinds of pictures, his wealth and fame increased during his own lifetime. He had two sons who also became painters and a daughter who married David Teniers. The year of the birth of his second son was the culminating point of his career. It was in this year, 1568, that he signed his picture entitled *The Blind*, now in the Naples Museum. *The Magpie on the Gallows*, which he considered one of his best works, is currently located in Darmstadt.

He did not long enjoy the happiness he had earned in so legitimate a way through his work as he died the following year, aged approximately forty-four. With him disappeared one of the most original figures of Flemish art. Just at the time when art seemed likely to be misled by the Italianising influence, Bruegel brought its best traditions into honour once more. Undoubtedly he was

Pieter Bruegel the Elder,
Landscape with the Flight into Egypt, 1563.
Oil on panel, 37.1 x 55.6 cm.
The Courtauld Gallery, London.



violent and somewhat harsh in his work, but his power stands out in strong contrast when compared with the subtleties and insipidities of most of his contemporaries. It would be futile to look to any of these for such fertility and such wealth of imagination. In his paintings he liked contrasts, even in his subjects. Deep browns and blacks are used with pure whites, and he never fears to accentuate the brilliancy of his reds, yellows and greens. But while he leaves all their fullness to these colours, he composes harmonies of strange boldness with them. Bruegel was not ultra-refined; he belonged to his own little village and did not lose his robustness in the city. With his cheerful gaiety and fun, and his constant raciness, he gives us an art, which, though perhaps at the price of some coarseness, sustained intact its power and freshness. We shall not study here the work of his elder son, Pieter II who, as his nickname of "Hell" Bruegel indicates, preferred painting fantastic and diabolical pictures. The second son, Jan, was called "Velvet" Brueghel on account of the elegance of his dress and manners. But this epithet is also justified by the soft and minute finish of his style. He was scarcely a year old when, on the death of his father, he was

adopted by his grandmother. She was an artist herself, and she taught the child to paint in watercolours. After taking lessons from Pieter Goekindt, a painter not well known, he made a pilgrimage to Italy, in accordance with the fashion of his time. He stayed there from 1593 to 1596, sketching the monuments and ruins of Rome.

Owing to the consideration in which his father was held and to his own personal charm, Jan soon made a place for himself in Antwerp, and was immediately admitted to the Guild of St. Luke. Besides the complex compositions, which so often tempted Bruegel, he also painted landscapes, but of very unequal value. The best of them, those in which the various themes are most accurately presented, are his various *Roads*, *Approaches to a Town*, and *Canals*.

Velvet Brueghel (Jan Brueghel the Elder),
River Landscape with Resting Hikers, 1594.
Oil on copper, 25.5 x 34.5 cm.
Private collection.



Pieter Bruegel the Elder,
The Hunters in the Snow (Winter), 1565.
Oil on oak, 117 x 162 cm.
Gemäldegalerie, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Vienna.

These are all panoramic views, animated by numberless figures to which he gives lifelike attitudes and gestures. In spite of the extreme abundance of detail, he preserves a great simplicity; but on the other hand there is often a great medley and crudeness of tone. Generally, he made use of the conventional three tones so dear to Patenier. Bruegel, perhaps, carried this to a greater excess than his predecessors. No doubt the colour of some of his landscapes has changed, for we find in the foreground of several of them those sharp blues which attract and offend the eye. Nevertheless, he gave more than one useful lesson to the landscapists who came after him, teaching them how to render the foliage of the various kinds of trees and how to characterise them more satisfactorily. His productions were very much in demand during his lifetime, and owing to his work he was able to successfully bring up the nine children of his two marriages. He died in 1625, and Rubens undertook the role of guardian to his children. He also painted the portrait of his friend, to be enshrined in the monument erected to his memory by his family in the church of St. George.

His two sons were also artists. Jan treated, with less skill, the same subjects as his father, and Ambros was known as a flower painter. "Velvet" Brueghel may be considered the last of that dynasty of artists with whom the development of the Flemish school can be studied in a connected way. Between the marvellous commencement and the rapid decline of this school, there is another glorious name that deserves a place of honour. Rubens cannot exactly be classed as a landscapist and yet, in the scenery he painted when directly inspired by nature, he manifested all the originality of his universal ability. As Delacroix remarks, "Specialists, who have only one branch of work are often inferior to those who, taking in everything from a high standpoint, bring into the one branch remarkable grandeur although they may not have the same perfection of detail, Rubens and Titian, in their landscapes, are examples of this."

Although he loved nature passionately, Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) did not paint pure landscape until very late. We know what a beneficent and lasting influence the eight years spent in Italy (1600-1608), at the beginning of his career exercised over him. Although he certainly learnt much there, he did not change his methods. Before leaving Flanders he was in possession of the technique to which he would be faithful his whole life. He was quite aware of its excellence, and although he was constantly seeking to improve, he did not attempt to modify its essential principles. His technique was that of his predecessors, the best Antwerp painters, in particular that of the elder Bruegel, for whom he had a special admiration. Rubens had more delicacy and suppleness, but he also had the same virile qualities, the firm drawing and the clear, strong values. It will be readily understood

that he reaped great benefit both from the study of the masterpieces and from his interaction with artists in Rome and at the Court of Mantua during his various visits to Italy.

Rubens conceived, there and then, an admiration for Titian which lasted all his life. During his stay in Italy he had no leisure for studying nature. On his return to Antwerp, he was cordially welcomed by his fellow-countrymen and by those in power, and his time was very much occupied. He fully realised the benefit to be derived from a closer study of nature, and, notebook in hand, would go out for this purpose. It was all he could do, however, to get a few rough sketches of such plants for the foreground of his pictures. When, by chance, he was able to escape from the town, he delighted to express, in a picture, the impressions he had enjoyed in the country.

Loving his work and his home, Rubens soon felt the need of having that home. He bought the house in which he lived, transformed it into a princely residence, which comprised his own studio and one for his pupils, and a rotunda built in the Italian style for his collections of every kind. These were arranged in good order and additions were constantly made to them.

In spite of his desire to remain at this base, where there was so much to attract and fascinate him, politics, which had more than once tempted him to neglect his art, now began to absorb his attention again. The Archduchess, who appreciated his intelligence and his reliability, appealed to his devotion to undertake certain delicate missions. It was only at rare intervals that he could return to his work. His prominent position caused him all kinds of inconveniences. His talent, his kindness, the charm of his conversation, his influential friends throughout Europe, and the artistic treasures he had accumulated in his house, attracted numerous visitors and led to the disturbance of his tranquillity. His diplomatic missions obliged him to spend several years abroad. Finally he begged the Archduchess to allow him to relinquish occupations which interfered with his art and even with his health. In order to have a more settled life, he now decided to spend the best season of the year in the country.

In the landscapes that were directly inspired by nature, Rubens shows all the originality of his genius. The impressions he has depicted are very different from those we find in the landscapists of that epoch. Without concerning himself with them, Rubens endeavoured to express all that interested him personally in the country, but although he respected the simplicity of the subjects he chose, he did not attempt to copy them literally. Unconsciously he put into his pictures something of the epic sense within him, which elevated and transformed them.



Velvet Brueghel (Jan Brueghel the Elder),

The Vision of Saint Hubert, 1615-1630.

Oil on wood, 63 x 100 cm.

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.



Peter Paul Rubens,
Landscape with Stone Carriers, c.1620.
Oil on canvas, 86 x 126.5 cm.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Each of his pictures, interesting as it was in itself, had its own special meaning in a series which included all the most characteristic aspects of the landscape. These pictures were varied by the points of view, the differences in the sky, the hour of day, and by the succession of work which the change of season demanded.

Above everything, Rubens loved to paint the summer, with its fertility and magnificence. He has given us a large number of landscapes, the subjects being taken from the country around Steen. These pictures, therefore, must date from towards the end of his career.

The Return from the Fields is very interesting. Under a sky tinged by the gleams of the setting sun, the vast Flemish plain, with its woods and meadows, its villages half hidden by greenery, stretches out to the bluish horizon. In the distance is the town of Malines, dominated by the Saint-Rombaut steeple. The sun, which is just disappearing, lights up the whole country with its last rays. In the midst of the increased activity which, at this moment, seems to

animate the scene, the peace of approaching night is suggested, and one feels that in the cool air the vague fragrance of the freshly-cut hay fills the atmosphere. Very different, but perhaps still more natural, is the impression of that *Landscape with a Rainbow*. Here, too, summer, with all its splendour of colouring, is depicted. The ripe, golden corn presents a strong contrast to the green of the meadows, whose brilliancy is more vivid after the rain, while the treetops, lit up by the sun, stand out against the sombre clouds on which is seen the huge curve of the rainbow.

The importance which Rubens gives to the changing aspects of the sky is quite an innovation. No other artist had thought of representing the great combats of the clouds and their perpetual transformations. It was not only the falling of the snow or the appearance of the rainbow after the storm that he painted. All the various phenomena of light and all the atmospheric disturbances attracted his attention and tempted his brush. In his picture of the *Cart Stuck in the Mire*, also referred to as *The Storm*, we see the owners of the cart endeavouring to extricate it from the furrows in which it is wedged. They are evidently in a hurry, as night is approaching and the road is rough. The mysterious twilight, so dear to contemporary landscapists, had never inspired artists before Rubens, and he expresses its poetical vagueness with exquisite charm. His predecessors had rarely been tempted to portray the solemn calm of the starry night.

Peter Paul Rubens,
Landscape with a Rainbow, 1636-1638.
Oil on canvas, 86 x 130 cm.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



In each of these landscapes, the figures or animals, in lifelike attitudes, always seem to be in just the right place. They characterise the picture or relieve its tone by an effective touch, such as the white of a horse, or the bright blue or red of a skirt. In one picture two men are sawing a tree, a fowler has spread his nets, and two ladies and a horseman half hidden in the shrubs are waiting to see the birds captured.

Profitable though absolute freedom and mental repose would have been to Rubens during the last years of his life, he was not able to spend as much time in his home at Steen as he would have liked. Certain unavoidable obligations compelled him to return to Antwerp. He had more orders than he could execute from Philip IV, and died in the midst of completing them. At the end of the summer of 1639 he left Steen, where he had been to recuperate, and this was the last he saw of his home, for on the 30th of May, 1640, he died after great suffering. The very name of Rubens suffices, in our days, to express the loss to art occasioned by his death.

Even if with Rubens, the star of the Flemish school, disappeared, David Teniers was greatly influenced by him. He, too, but with less breadth of treatment, attempted, various styles. Without idealising his subject or drawing much on his imagination, he simply painted what he saw. He frequently treats the unimportant sides of great

subjects, but his intelligence interests us with the humblest themes. His lively and amusing composition is somewhat summary perhaps, and his thin and extremely transparent colour sometimes lacks strength. On a thinly-painted surface he gives the illusion of careful finish by a few vigorous accents in the shadows, and highlights put in with marvellous skill. But his delicacy and firmness of touch are unique.

These qualities, which are more evident in his interiors, are also to be found in his landscapes. Sparingly coloured, with their animated skies and fluttering leaves, they are the outcome of the artist's true sense of nature, and they give evidence of his keen observation. The facility with which he worked seems incredible. With the proceeds of his pictures he bought the picturesque Chateau of Dry Toren, and, when making little excursions in the neighbourhood with his guests, he would note the various effects that appealed to him, and, as soon as he returned to his studio, would paint pictures quickly from these sketches.

Peter Paul Rubens,
Return of the Peasants from the Fields, 1635.
Oil on wood, 121 x 194 cm.
Palazzo Pitti, Florence.



David Teniers the Younger,
Peasants Merrymaking, c.1650.
Oil on copper, 69 x 86 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

Albrecht Dürer,
Fir Tree (Picea abies), 1495-1496.
Watercolour and gouache on paper, 29.3 x 19.4 cm.
The British Museum, London.

After these artists of the great epoch, who were brought up in the school of nature, the decline of the Flemish school was soon evident. This was not for lack of talent; it was simply that art was no longer the result of a direct study of nature with many of these Italianised painters, some of whom had never even seen Italy. Others were clever executants who, merely through continually copying each other, soon lost the sense of reality, and substituted for it school methods and conventional formulas.

In spite of the incontestable qualities of these artists, this school seems gradually to have lost life. It was not until after a long interval that Flemish artists, won over by the simpler and more passionate method of modern landscapists, returned once more to the study of nature, in search of the instruction that she alone can give.

German Landscape

It was near the banks of the Rhine that the first manifestation of Christian art in Germany appeared. The river, by facilitating interaction between Cologne and the South of Europe and Flanders, procured prosperity and culture for this city and for the surrounding country at an earlier date than the rest of Germany. Torn by violent strife, it was not until much later that the other parts of Germany attained the same degree of cultural development. The poetry of the Minnesang certainly abounded in picturesque features; the mystery of the great forests, the return of spring flowers, and the songs of constantly singing birds; and yet, all these poetical details, inspired by a love of nature, did not appeal to German painters. In the pictures of the early Rhenish School, for instance, a few flowers and plants, presented in a very summary fashion, were timidly depicted under the feet of the saints, or were to be seen against the gold used for a background to these figures.

Stefan Lochner's work is more impressive and individualistic. Lochner went to live in Cologne around 1440, and died there on December 24th, 1451. He was the painter of the admirable triptych of the *Adoration of the Magi*, the altarpiece of Cologne Cathedral. We have in his work that charm of purity, softness, and delicacy which is to be found in the pictures of Fra Angelico and Memling, who had preceded him. Like them, he delighted in painting the Virgin, and with the sweet, candid type of woman he depicts, he associates the softest harmonies and the most delicate perfumes of nature as being worthy of her. Birds are singing among the rosebushes in the background, and ripe strawberries and spring violets are to be seen in the grass at her feet.





federici florentini



A little later, when Germany was again torn by internal strife, art began to decline, and its incoherent efforts were the outcome of the agitated life of the period. But from the very midst of those troubled times one great master emerged, whose genius moved German art forward.

Superior though he was to his predecessors and to his contemporaries, both as a painter and an engraver, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), was not free from the old traditions. He was influenced by various masters. For more than three years he studied under Michael Wolgemut, and was influenced later by Jacopo de Barbari and by Andrea Mantegna. He belongs essentially to his times and, like his fellow artists, as a painter, he was a somewhat belated representative of the Middle Ages at the time of the Renaissance movement. But in his landscape drawings, both in his choice of subjects and in his interpretation of nature, he is absolutely original and distinctly an innovator. The town in which he was born, and in which he lived and died, does not account for his genius, but it was nevertheless instrumental in calling it forth.

The name Dürer has become intimately associated with Nuremberg. Like Bruges and Venice, the historical aspect of the place appeals to the imagination. His father had come from Hungary, and had settled in Nuremberg as a goldsmith in 1455. He married the daughter of a citizen there and had eighteen children. Albrecht, the third of these children, was born on May 21st, 1471 and, like many Italian artists of that epoch, served his apprenticeship in his father's workshop. It was in this way that he acquired the skill of hand and somewhat dry precision which we see in his pictures and etchings. In 1486 he entered the studio of a painter who had a great reputation at that time in Nuremberg. This painter was Michael Wolgemut, a stiff and formal artist, who owes the place he now occupies in the history of art to his illustrious pupil.

Dürer learnt his profession in this studio, where the roughness and coarseness of his fellow students frequently tried his patience. Outside the studio the young artist obtained more direct and profitable instruction from nature. He painted his own portrait and that of his various acquaintances. He sketched or painted in watercolour the horizon which he saw from his window, the plants

Albrecht Dürer,
View of Val D'Arco in South Tyrol, c.1495.
 Pen drawing in brown Indian ink and with gouache and topped
 by black Indian ink, 22.3 x 22.2 cm.
 Musée du Louvre, Paris.

and flowers he gathered when out walking, and animals dead or alive. In this way he learnt to observe and to paint whatever he saw, only troubling to satisfy himself with his work. Everything seemed to him worth painting and the most insignificant objects worth observing. He endeavoured to copy to the best of his ability the infinite diversity of their forms, proportions, and substances.

By the perfection of his work, he obliges us to have the same admiration for reality that he himself had. Even when he had arrived at the most masterly certainty and decision, he retained that respectful simplicity which is the supreme charm of great talent. With his active mind and keen intelligence, he soon found the perspective before him too limited. Young and ardent, he longed to see something new, to learn more, to know the great works of the past and to enjoy the picturesque beauties of neighbouring countries. Italy, with its monuments and works of art, attracted him and, at the age of nineteen, in 1490, he went abroad, with very little money, but rich in hope and confidence. He went through Alsace, Basel, Augsburg, the Tyrol, and, crossing the Alps, made straight for Venice. Many attempts have been made to fix exactly the itinerary and dates of this journey and of the sketches from nature that he made on the way. The precocity of the young artist's talent and the fact that there were no dates on his sketches, make it impossible to decide whether they should be attributed to this first journey or to his second pilgrimage (1505-1507). The first journey has even been contested by some of Dürer's biographers, but it is now proved to have taken place. Fascinated by the beauty of the landscape, he must have stayed some time in Trent and made several drawings. First there is the general view, also in watercolour, in which he shows the picturesque situation of Trent with the river, towers, palaces, cathedral and amphitheatre of mountains closing in the horizon. There is also another sketch, touched slightly with watercolour, which represents the Chateau at Trent with its high walls and one of the city gates.

Two months after his return to Nuremberg, Dürer married a young girl named Agnes Frey, with whom he received a dowry of 200 florins. He has left us several faithful portraits of her, painted at different times. Although he was only twenty-three years of age, his talent was mature. He lived a simple, frugal life, content with the moderate return he received for his hard work. He had a few orders for his pictures, and his etchings began to attract attention and to be in demand. He made use of his landscape sketches for the backgrounds of his compositions, but, whilst he subordinated these to the subjects treated, we must acknowledge that he scarcely succeeded in giving perfect cohesion to the whole picture.



Except in his portraits, particularly those of himself, which are masterly, his painting is cold, thin, somewhat dry, and rarely harmonious. It is evident from his pictures that he respected tradition and was influenced by the remembrance of the masterpieces he had seen in Italy. But the direct study of nature continued to give him the satisfaction which it had always given him. In the presence of nature he was neither a slave nor an exponent of any school. He gave himself full liberty. "Man's resources are very limited in comparison with God's creations," he himself said. And as he felt that his own admiration for the works of the past paralysed his creative energy, he strongly insisted, "In order to paint a good picture it was no use hoping to take anything from a human work, as no man on earth had within him entire beauty... Art is contained in nature and the Master is he who can extract it from nature."

It was for himself and for his own satisfaction that he sketched the view from his own window of the housetops that formed the horizon to which he was accustomed. There is also a sketch of one of the picturesque views of the town near his home. In his drawing he has reproduced, with scrupulous exactness and a perfect understanding of

aerial perspective, the walls of the former boundary of Nuremberg as far as the Thiergartner Gate, with a glimpse of one of the more distant parts of the town in the background. Dürer was one of the first to understand the peculiar beauty of big trees, and with loving patience he set himself to render their imposing outline, their intermingled branches and their masses of leaves. We have an example of this in his conscientious study of a *Pine Tree*, in the study in red chalk.

The simplest vegetation had a charm for Dürer, and he had the gift of communicating this charm to us. In a sketch which is very carefully studied, we have a medley of plants on the banks of a

Albrecht Dürer,
Ruin of a Castle on top of a rock near a river ("Altes Schloss"), 1495.
Watercolour and gouache on paper, 15.3 x 24.9 cm.
Private collection.

Hans Thoma,
German Landscape, 1890.
Oil on canvas, 113 x 88.8 cm.
Neue Pinakothek, Munich.





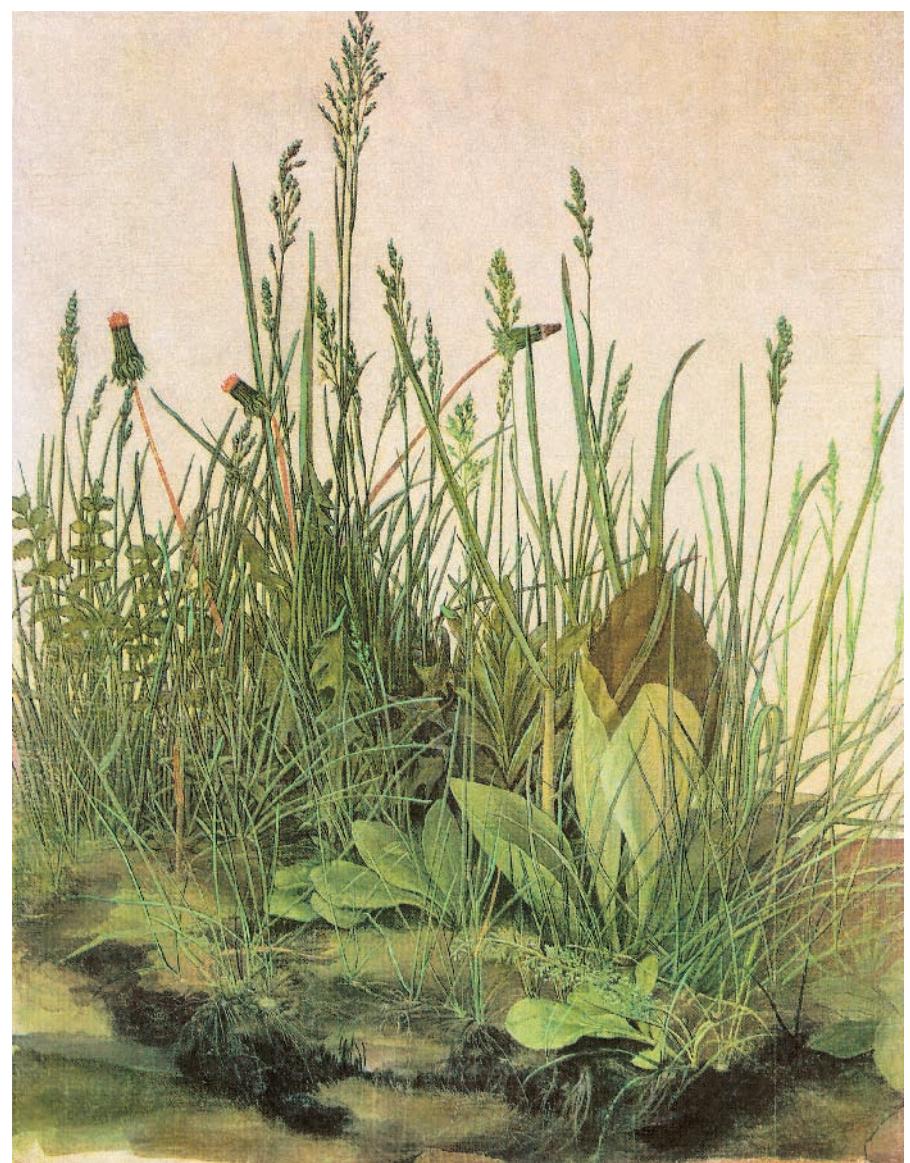
Albrecht Dürer,
Fisherman's House on a Lake, near Nuremberg, c.1496.
Watercolour on paper, 21.3 x 22.5 cm.
The British Museum, London.

peaceful river. Everything is mingled in that disorder so dear to nature. The stalks and leaves are all intertwined, some of them stiff and straight, others flexible and easily bent. Dürer excelled in making the most of this chaos, which to another artist might have seemed hopeless. Without appearing to emphasise, and with marvellous ease and dexterity, he gives to each plant its own special characteristic, its bright or dull tissue, its delicate veining, its capricious twists and turns. The outline of the plants seems at first to be of extreme simplicity, but when analysed it is most complex. Light and shade have full play, changing the perspective, and emphasising the prominent parts. The sapling rushes tremblingly up, rising from the roots, plunged in the transparent water, right up to the top of the pointed stems. It is the infinite richness of nature itself, with its eternal life and youth, which a wonderful artist reveals to us here. This study of a simple tuft of grasses, which we might have passed without noticing, captivates us, owing to the naturalness and grace which the artist has put into it.

Dürer, like Leonardo, excelled in lending interest to trifling things, but in his studies of landscape he understood, better than Leonardo, how to represent the whole. He always treats these studies with the required delicacy and breadth. He brings out clearly the chief characteristics of the subjects that have tempted him, and makes of these so many special themes, which so appeal to the imagination that they remain engraved in our memory. He evidently liked this wild and rocky country with its melancholy and absolutely modern poetry, for he sketched at least two other studies while there. The first of these bears the name of *Valley of Kalkreuth*, the place where it was executed, and this title is in his own handwriting. The sketch entitled *Altes Schloss* is perhaps still more expressive, as it is more finished and all the details lend themselves to the general impression. It represents an old castle, in the midst of the woods, perched on a peak bristling with dark pine trees, whose outlines stand out strongly against the light sky. A more striking picture could not be conceived, nor one that appeals more strongly to the imagination, than that of this feudal Burg, separated from the rest of the world, and whose high walls must have contained so many mysterious lives.

Such as they are, Dürer's landscape drawings are a revelation. They defy all comparison with the works of his predecessors or of his contemporaries. In order to appreciate their worth, they must be compared with the interpretations which had hitherto been given of nature, and we must go to Rembrandt to find such talent combined with such sincerity.

For some inexplicable reason, after his second visit to Venice in 1507, Dürer's landscape studies became more rare. He was



Albrecht Dürer,
The Large Turf, c.1503.
Watercolour and gouache on paper, 41 x 32 cm.
Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.



probably absorbed by the numerous commissions he received, for he scarcely ever found time for sketching the country around Nuremberg. He studied the subjects that appealed to him with great conscientiousness, and always put his best work into them. One of his pictures depicts a mountainous district. Another represents a pool of water at sunset, with a fisherman's cottage with rushes, reeds and aquatic plants all around it.

Dürer's life was a busy one to the very end. Although he had almost entirely given up landscape, despite that at the commencement of his career it had given him such pleasure, he

always intended to return to it. At the end of his *Treatise on Proportion*, published in 1527, a year before his death, he announced his intention of devoting himself, before anything else, to the study of the art of landscape painting, if God spared his life. It is to be regretted that he was not able to do this, as it would be most interesting to know what the great artist's ideas were on this subject. Entirely alone, and independently of all rules, he had learnt to see nature as it is, to comprehend it, and to express its sovereign charm.

Dürer's landscape sketches from nature, therefore, constitute an exception, not only in his own work, but in the history of the whole German school. It is not surprising that they exercised no influence over the development of that school. In the first place, they were unknown, as they were either hidden away in his own portfolios or scattered about in various collections. But had they been accessible they would not have been appreciated

Albrecht Dürer,
The Water Mill, c.1498.
Watercolour and gouache on paper, 25.1 x 36.7 cm.
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.



at their true value. Landscape painting in those days was treated in an extremely conventional way, and Dürer's absolute sincerity, coupled with his impeccable science, would have been considered too great a novelty. As a landscapist, therefore, Dürer stands alone in German art, and in order to appreciate his worth we have only to consider the work of his contemporaries and pupils.

In Germany, after Dürer, we have to wait for nearly a century before finding, in Adam Elsheimer (1578-1610), a landscapist of any great value. Elsheimer went to Rome at the age of twenty-two, and there was especially influenced. Curious to search out new paths, he delighted in discovering the most solitary and picturesque spots where nature had freely put forth her wealth of beauty. Plants with large leaves are generally to be found in the foreground of his pictures; hop, ivy and wild vines climb up the trunks of the trees and fall in thick garlands

from the branches. The artist's kindness won for him the friendship of his numerous fellow artists of the foreign colony in Rome. This, no doubt, accounts for the reputation he won and the important place his compatriots continue to attribute to him in the history of art, for certainly his own talent does not suffice to account for the rank assigned to him. His name is, nevertheless, the only one we can give as a landscapist of the German school down to the Romanticism of the nineteenth century. This school seems to have foundered completely during the period of the religious wars and the internal strife which so long disturbed the tranquillity of the whole of Germany.

Adam Elsheimer,
Flight into Egypt, 1609.
Oil on copper, 31 x 41 cm.
Alte Pinakothek, Munich.



Chapter 3

Dutch Landscapists



Landscape Painting



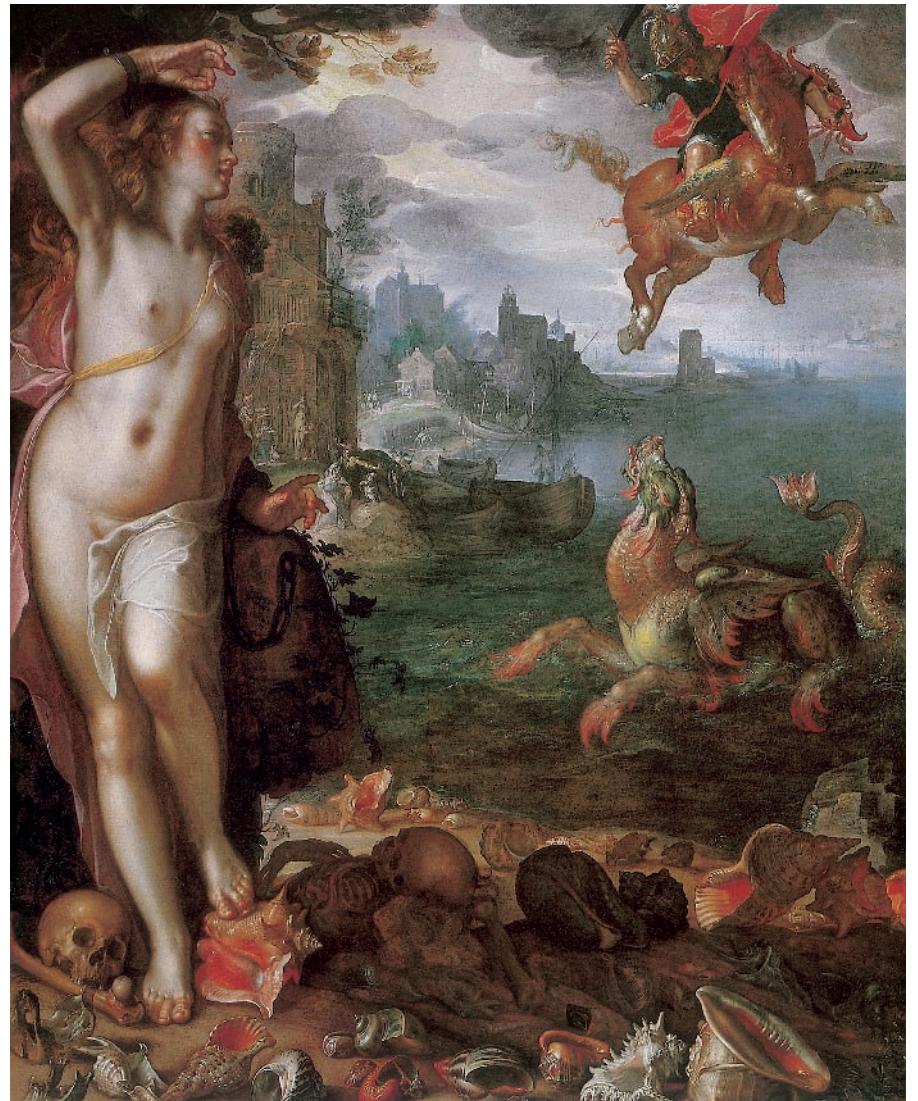
The School of Utrecht and the "Italianisers"

With the genius of the Van Eycks, oil painting, as we have seen, first flourished in Northern countries with incomparable brilliancy. We cannot, however, either before or immediately after them, speak of a Dutch School distinct from the early Flemish School. During the first years of the seventeenth century there were marked differences between the artistic aims of Flanders and of the Netherlands. The entire country had risen against the foreign tyranny and was endeavouring to shake off the Spanish yoke. The struggle in the Southern provinces was neither as intense nor as stubborn as in those of the North. Whilst the former accepted the government to which for long afterwards they were subject, the others would not agree to any arrangement and would not lay down their arms until they had secured their complete independence. With this political division, a separation also took place between the two schools, which had hitherto been united. Faithful to its old traditions, the Flemish School considered Antwerp as its principal centre. The Dutch School, on the other hand, inaugurated a new and quite original art under very special conditions.

In spite of the marked differences that characterise these two schools, it is needless to say that there are many bonds and affinities between them. The lines of demarcation, by which critics endeavour to establish such limitations, can never be absolute in any time or country. Between Catholic Flanders and Protestant Holland, the city of Utrecht has always held an intermediary place in the history of landscape painting. This is easily explained by its geographical situation and by the religious beliefs to which it remained attached.

Utrecht soon became an artistic centre, but the artists who were either born or who had settled there yielded to the current which was carrying away their fellow artists of all countries to Italy. It was by these foreigners, who settled in Rome, that static Italian art, after painters like the Carracci and Caravaggio, was continued. It gradually developed into a cosmopolitan art, whose chief representatives were the German Adam Elsheimer, the brothers Mattheus and Paul Bril from Flanders and two Frenchmen who had settled in the Eternal City, Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain. At Utrecht, Abraham Bloemaert, although he was not born in Italy and had never even seen it, may be considered the first of the Dutch Italianisers.

The two brothers Andries and Jan Both, who were born at Utrecht around the year 1610 and were disciples of Bloemaert, set out together for Italy. Andries Both, who was probably the elder of the two, died there in his fortieth year. His brother, Jan Both,



Rembrandt (Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn),

Landscape with an Obelisk (detail), 1638.

Oil on wood, 55 x 71.5 cm.

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

(p. 64-65)

Paul Bril,

Stag Hunt, c.1590-1595.

Oil on canvas, 105 x 137 cm.

Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Joachim Wtewael,

Perseus and Andromeda, 1611.

Oil on canvas, 180 x 150 cm.

Musée du Louvre, Paris.



returned to his native city and lived there until his death on the 9th of August, 1652. Very few paintings have been preserved which can, with certainty, be attributed to A. Both. The works of J. Both, the more celebrated of the two brothers, are fairly numerous. He seems to have been inspired by Claude Lorrain. He is generally attracted by the more undulating countries whose characteristic aspects he adds to his art. His composition is both natural and graceful. His trees, with their light foliage, stand out against a clear sky in which are seen a few clouds tinged with the last rays of the setting sun, while on the horizon, great bluish shadows are covering the mountains. J. Both expresses very truthfully and, at times, poetically, the striking contrasts peculiar to Italy in those brief moments when the heat of day is suddenly followed by the coolness of twilight. The large landscapes in the Louvre are good specimens of his style. They are painted in a pleasing manner and have charming contrasts of warm tones in the light against

the deep cold blue of the shadows. The trees with jagged outlines, which are no doubt plane trees, may be considered as J. Both's signature.

Nicolas Berchem (1620-1683), was not a native of Utrecht, but he, too, was one of the Italianisers and, on account of his talent, should rank with the foremost of this group. He was baptised at Haarlem on the 1st of October, 1620. Berchem's father gave him his first lessons and he afterwards studied with many other masters. In 1642, he belonged to the Guild of St. Luke at Haarlem, and he then went to Amsterdam where he lived until his death in 1683. The date of his visit to Italy is not known and some critics contend that he never went there at all. However, we have proof of this journey in the sketches made on his way over the Alps and in the subjects of most of his pictures, taken from the shores of the Mediterranean and the neighbourhood of Genoa, rather than from the countryside around Rome.

Karel Dujardin,
A Party of Charlatans in an Italian Landscape, 1657.
Oil on canvas, 45 x 52 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Berchem, who was endowed with the most remarkable diversity of talent, treated all subjects. We have from his brush pastorals, hunting scenes, processions being attacked, and religious or



mythological subjects. There are also symbolical paintings. The subjects of Berchem's landscapes are extremely diverse. There are compositions which are purely academic. There are others with picturesque details grouped together with little reflection of reality.

Although Berchem's facility and vivacity are admirable in his two large pictures, it is to be regretted that the drawing should be so summary and that the medley of colours should spoil the general harmony. In his smaller pictures, he is sometimes exquisite. Berchem's qualities are more apparent in those works which were not executed from his Italian memories, but inspired by nature in Holland. Hardworking and methodical, Berchem produced a great number of pictures. Nearly every museum in Europe has many of his works, almost every one of which is signed.

After Berchem, the emigration movement of the Dutch landscapists to Italy continued. Each one of these artists, according to his education, taste, or aptitude, endeavoured to reproduce the particular aspects of this scenery that appealed to him most; and this seemed to be its purely decorative and picturesque side. Gradually, however, too much attention was paid to convention-

ality and to given formulas, and this superficial art, lacking as it was in conviction and foundation, could not live long.

Without lingering over the commonplace productions which marked its rapid decline, it will be more profitable to study the Dutch artists who formed the school of landscape painting in the Netherlands, the artists who found their best inspirations and achievements in their constant study of nature.

The Landscapists of Haarlem

Compelled to struggle with the sea for the very ground of their country, to protect it from its encroachments, and at the same time to wrest it by the most heroic struggle from the foreigners who occupied it, the Dutch learned to love their native land

Jacob van Ruisdael,
The Ray of Sunlight, 1660s.
Oil on canvas, 83 x 99 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Jan Both,
The Woodbridge, c.1640-1652.
Pen and brown ink, grey wash, 19.5 x 28.5 cm.



Esaias van de Velde,
Rocky Landscape with Waterfall, 1629 (?).
Charcoal oil stumping, 20.9 x 31.1 cm.



through the great sacrifices they had to make for it. Their country is their own work, and, after being their school of endurance and energy, it now reminded them of their history. Their art, like their civilisation, is quite their own. It is a truly original art, and its qualities are due to the very special conditions of the life of the people.

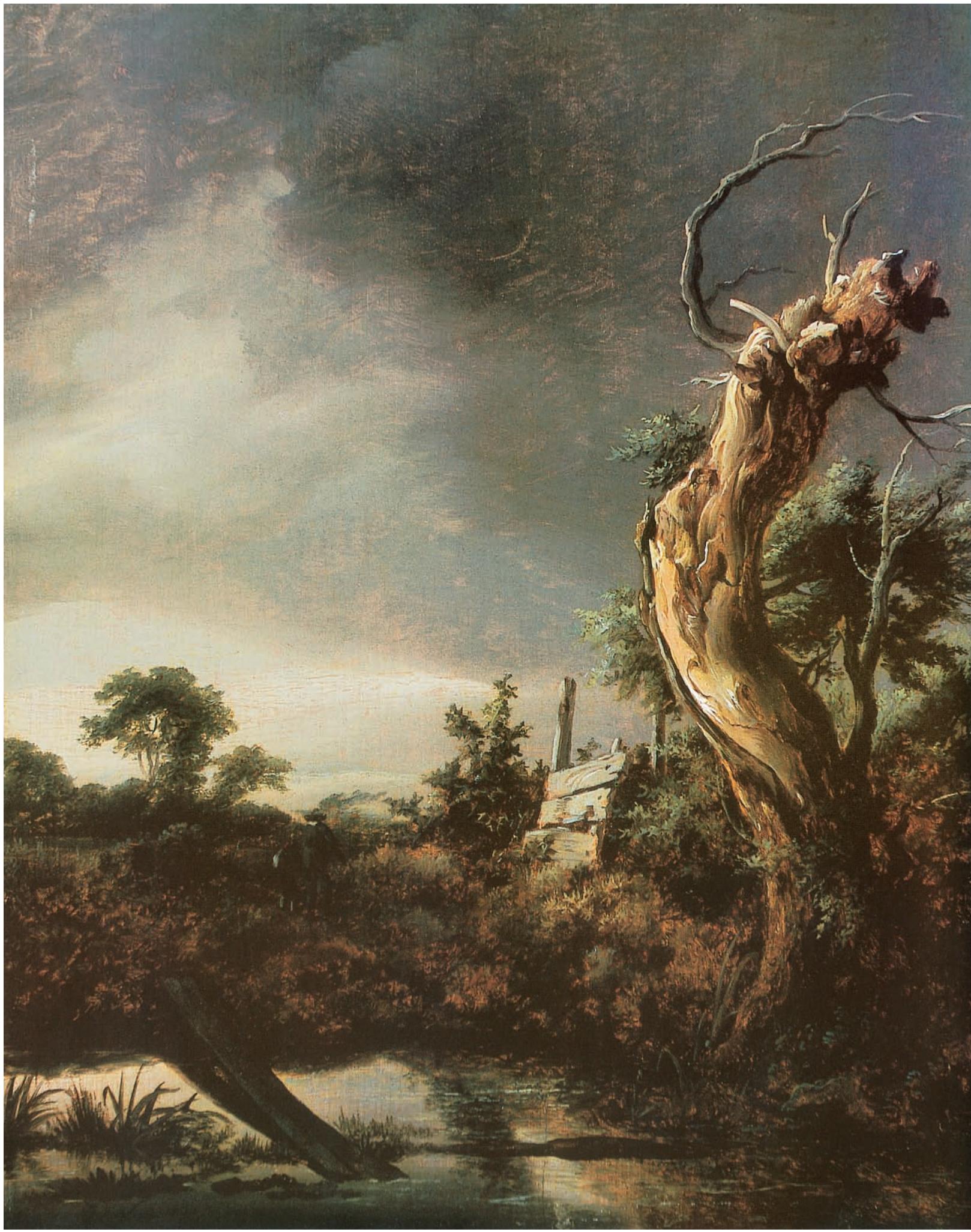
With the Reformation, artists of the Netherlands lost their former patrons. Neither religious subjects nor compositions taken from mythology nor from fable were likely to interest a population without much literary cultivation largely consigned to an existence mired in poverty. Observation and a close study of nature had to replace those traditions whose yoke the other schools had in a large measure accepted. The Dutch were gradually fascinated by the study of their country, and they then began to understand its special characteristics. The most insignificant

subjects were then enough for them. By sheer force of talent, the simplicity of the most humble themes was all that they needed. Disdainful of all artifice, they show us the views that charmed them and dwell on what has touched them.

After giving an example of the sturdiest resistance to the Spanish, Haarlem, by its situation, seemed destined to become the cradle of national art. As far back as 1504, there had been a Guild of

Jacob van Ruisdael,
Two Watermills and an Open Sluice at Singraven, c.1650-1652.
Oil on canvas, 87.3 x 111.5 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

Jacob van Ruisdael,
Landscape during a Storm, 1649.
Oil on oak, 25.5 x 21.5 cm.
Musée Fabre, Montpellier.





St. Luke there whose members were men belonging to any trade connected with art. An Academy was founded, the promoters imbued though they were with academic doctrines, insisted on the direct study of nature for all their pupils; and in the studios opened under their supervision, models came regularly to pose. Without knowing it, these Italianisers were preparing the way for a new art. A group of artists living in Haarlem began to present in the choice of their subjects, as well as in the execution of their works, the qualities which subsequently gave that school its original character.

Pieter Molijn (1595-1661) and Esaias van de Velde (c.1587-1630), by the spirit which they imparted to the movement and the confidence with which they advanced along new paths, attracted a host of imitators. Concerning themselves no longer with Italy, they endeavoured to depict all that especially attracted them in the everyday life or scenery about them. Van de Velde had perhaps

more influence than Molijn in the creation of the Dutch school of landscape painting.

Jan van Goyen (1596-1656) was born at Leiden on the 13th of January. He was not much younger than Van de Velde. Before taking lessons from him, he had studied in several other studios. Not content with the five masters with whom he had already studied, he was Van de Velde's disciple for a year, and the help he then received was sufficient to complete his artistic education.

With Van Goyen, the last bonds which united the Dutch and Flemish schools were broken asunder. While not claiming to embellish nature, he attempted to emphasise its characteristics without departing from reality. The sky and water were enough for him when he wished to express the poetry peculiar to his country and to the play of light which modifies its aspect at every instant. Under those vast skies, the water of the rivers and canals indistinctly reflects the ever-moving clouds, and seems to be their echo. The strongest values are set off against the frame of the picture and are modified towards the centre of the canvas, which is left light and open. The gaze is thus naturally attracted towards that part of the picture. Very vivid colouring is not necessary for

Jan van Goyen,
Path through the Dunes, 1629.
Oil on wood, 31.8 x 56.9 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.



these immense stretches of country; it would attract the eye unnecessarily. By toning down the brilliancy, the artist attains his end. But while the colouring is deliberately subdued, a few expressive touches are seen. These effects are felt and have a strange significance, but with the exception of these notes of colour very skilfully introduced, the picture is almost monochromatic. Van Goyen had no need to have recourse to another artist's brush as he could enliven his own landscapes and put into them all that he felt might lend interest. Free and easy as it was, Van Goyen's method seems to have been of an elementary simplicity. In places the canvas is barely covered, so that the black outline of the sketch shows, and yet in this quick workmanship there is no uncertainty, no wavering.

His sketches are very abstract, but Van Goyen was so familiar with all the aspects of Dutch scenery that when back in his studio he could reconstitute with absolute exactness the subjects which had appealed to him on his journey.

Van Goyen's pictures were much in demand during his lifetime. Nevertheless, the cost of living made it difficult for him to meet the expenses of his household, and he was compelled to find another

way of earning money. None of his commercial undertakings turned out well, and Van Goyen, like many of his fellow-artists, died insolvent.

The path, however, was now laid out for other artists. Salomon van Ruisdael (c.1602-1670) continued the work which Van Goyen had commenced. S. van Ruisdael's family had not long been living at Haarlem, having come there from Naarden. The relationship of all the members of this family to each other was, for a long while, very little known. Three, or perhaps even four, members of the family were landscapists and two of them were named Jacob. As they painted similar subjects, the confusion that has arisen with regard to them is not surprising.

A document, quoted by Adriaan van der Willigen, tells us that in 1642 a certain Isaac van Ruisdael, a widower, contracted a fresh marriage with a young girl of Haarlem, in which he was

Jan van Goyen,
Village Street, 1628.
Oil on wood, 35.9 x 63.1 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.



then living. This Isaac, who appears the same year on the list of the Guild of St. Luke, was a picture frame-maker and also a picture dealer. Salomon van Ruisdael, who was also living in Haarlem, was born there. His talent was much appreciated by his contemporaries and the family owed its fame to him. The exact date of his birth is not known; it was formerly said that he was born in 1610, but it is evident that it must have been earlier, as in 1623 we find his name on the list of the Guild of St. Luke. Nor is it known with whom S. van Ruisdael studied, and it is only by many analogies that we can trace the influence exercised over his artistic education by Van Goyen.

At the commencement of his career, S. van Ruisdael's works presented a certain resemblance to the works of Van Goyen, for which they were often mistaken. But subsequently they gave evidence of an ever-increasing originality and quite justify the favour in which they are now held. Their dates, 1631 to 1667, allow us to follow the great evolution in the development of his talent. In his pictures he can scarcely be distinguished from Van Goyen. His subjects are similar; his painting, like that of his predecessor, is delicate, light, and not very firm. Soon after this, however, the two artists seemed to have taken directly opposite turns. Van Goyen, caring more for effect than for colour, gradually restricted his palette, and by sheer force of simplicity, came gradually nearer to monochrome.

S. van Ruisdael, on the other hand, by degrees, adopted richer colours. With a freer brush, his landscapes gradually took a fuller, more intense tone and in his last works he attained extreme power. Eventually, more importance was given to living beings in S. van Ruisdael's compositions, and the more he put in, the more he varied them. Animals and people were rendered by him with such truthfulness of attitude and appearance as would suffice alone to make an artist famous. His favourite subjects were the same as those which Van Goyen usually treated: banks of rivers or canals with willows or elms hanging over the water. One of them is entitled *Castle by a River*. Both by his execution and by the different episodes he introduces, such as riders or carriages stopping in front of an inn, a ferryboat laden with animals crossing the river, or fishermen casting their nets, the painter gives a very individual note to his various subjects.

S. van Ruisdael painted his best works from 1650 to 1660. Together with richer and better composition, there is broader execution, and at the same time more delicate and pleasing colour in all these pictures. Later, his style became somewhat rougher and his colour scheme less harmonious and, at times, even a trifle crude.



Jacob van Ruisdael,
Dune Landscape with Fence.
Oil on oak, 44.3 x 36.3 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Jacob van Ruisdael,
The Jewish Cemetery at Ouderkerk, 1653-1655.
Oil on canvas, 84 x 95 cm.
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.



Isaac van Ostade,
Skaters on the Ice.
Oil on wood, 20.4 x 28.7 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.



Willem Gras,
Landscape with Sandy Path, c.1650.
Oil on wood, 27.1 x 33.5 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Landscape Painting

Like his brother Isaac, S. van Ruisdael had a son who was an artist, and the two cousins, who were also landscapists, were both named Jacob. S. van Ruisdael did not transmit his talent to his son. The pictures that bear the latter's monogram give us a poor idea of his ability. The most illustrious member of this family, Jacob van Ruisdael (c.1628-1682) was also one of the greatest of Dutch landscapists. Unfortunately we only have very incomplete information about his life. We have a document, according to which we can fix the date of his birth as 1628 or 1629. We know that he was born at Haarlem and that he was the son of Isaac, the frame manufacturer, by his first wife. With this change of dates, I. van Ruisdael's precocity, as related by his biographers, is still more amazing.

It is supposed that his uncle, S. van Ruisdael, was his professor, but he may also have had lessons from his father, if the latter were a painter, as Wilhelm von Bode believes. Ruisdael's first landscapes deal with very simple subjects taken from the neighbourhood of Haarlem. The foreground is of somewhat summary execution and the details are hidden in the reddish tone of the priming, whilst the background and the trees, which are scrupulously studied, are harsh and cold in colour and reveal laboured handling. The drawing of the trees, with its extreme exactness, denotes minute study and the broken foliage stands out with a certain hardness against the sky. The artist must have pursued the study of all the microscopic vegetation with great patience. He gradually familiarised himself with all the elements of landscape painting and practised expressing their diversity, whilst maintaining the unity of the whole.

The question has been raised as to whether the great master ever left the country of his birth, that country of which he has given us such faithful pictures. It has been proved, at any rate, that he did not yield to the emigration movement which drew so many of his brother-artists away, over the mountains. There is nothing in his work to justify the supposition, which was at one time general, that he had made an excursion to Italy with his friend Berchem. It was rather towards the Northern countries that he was attracted, and they supplied him with subjects for many of his pictures.

Allaert van Everdingen (c.1621-1675) was born at Alkmaar. He had lessons from Roelandt Savery, who had been J. van Ruisdael's professor, or at any rate his inspirer, and then went to Haarlem to study under Molijn. In 1646 he became a member of the Guild of St. Luke. It is difficult, therefore, to imagine that J. van Ruisdael, who was scarcely any younger than Everdingen, should have been his pupil, particularly as J. van

Ruisdael was able to take advantage of his uncle's teaching and also perhaps of his own father's. He may, of course, have been influenced by Everdingen. Although the latter's talent was somewhat unequal, he certainly was, at times, a landscapist of rare merit.

With regard to the landscapes inspired by Norwegian scenery, it is generally believed that Everdingen visited the country between 1640 and 1645. After that date we find him living in Haarlem, and until 1651 information may be obtained concerning him. Between Alkmaar, where he was born, and Norway, there was constant interaction, as the Dutch obtained wood for boat-building and other purposes. As a great many families from the Netherlands were living there, Everdingen would no doubt have been welcomed by his fellow countrymen.

It is very likely that this artist, in full possession of his talent, should have chosen to paint pictures in imitation of Everdingen, making use of his drawings or of his studies. Although J. van Ruisdael's Norwegian waterfalls and views are not equal to his Dutch landscapes, we find in the former a variety of motive, a great exactness of detail, and an extremely individual poetic feeling which make his interpretation of nature very superior to anything Everdingen has given us. How could he have put into work, only studied at secondhand, more originality and truth than Everdingen? It is our opinion that J. van Ruisdael visited Norway, and that his pictures are based upon his own studies.

This attempt of his was no more successful than several others which he made. J. van Ruisdael no doubt hoped that compositions inspired by such varied scenery as that of Norway would attract more attention. In this he was mistaken. He was never popular, and his life at Haarlem was difficult. His works brought but moderate prices, and he therefore decided to leave his native city. There were fewer artists in Amsterdam, and it was also a wealthier place. Thinking that the conditions of life there might be more favourable, J. van Ruisdael made up his mind to take up residence in that city. In 1659, he obtained the right of citizenship, and he remained in Amsterdam until 1681. He does not appear, however, to have increased his resources. His talent was now at its best and, owing to constant work, his execution became freer and broader. His colouring had that delicacy of shade and harmony peculiar to Northern countries. His drawing was clever and of irreproachable correctness, and it was enhanced by dexterity of touch which lent itself admirably to the rendering of the numerous details which are the very life of his landscapes. He subordinated them to the general effect, however, so that they all contributed towards the impression



Meindert Hobbema,
The Avenue at Middelharnis, 1689.
Oil on canvas, 103.5 x 141 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

Landscape Painting



which he wished to produce. This branch of art, which was so serious and so new, was not appreciated at its proper value by the public, but J. van Ruisdael found in the appreciation of his fellow-artists a consolation for the general indifference. The numerous collaborators, to whom he had recourse for filling in his landscapes, show the esteem which they had for him. Among them, we find the names of Berchem, Adriaen van Ostade, and Adriaen van de Velde.

This is a proof that J. van Ruisdael associated with the foremost artists of his time. No doubt he thought that by having recourse to these men, his pictures would be more appreciated by buyers. In order to earn his living, J. van Ruisdael accepted work of all kinds. Besides his Norwegian landscapes, he painted views of Amsterdam and even of country houses belonging to wealthy Dutchmen. The melancholy and sadness to which he was inclined gradually revealed itself in these works and was not calculated to attract buyers. Finally, because of his illness, he could not go outdoors for his studies. He must have been obliged to give up work, too, for there are no pictures of his bearing the date of those last years. Lonely as he was in Amsterdam, he was greatly helped by his coreligionists of Haarlem. He and all his family belonged to the sect of the Mennonites and these "Friends" as they called themselves, obtained a place for him in an almshouse of his native city, and generously offered to pay the necessary pension for him. J. van Ruisdael's "Friends" were not called upon to pay the self-imposed contribution very long, as on the 24th March, 1682, Van der Willigen mentions a final document, the last item of the gloomy record concerning the great artist. This document is the registration of a sum of "four florins for the expense of opening the tomb of Jacob van Ruisdael in the Church of St. Bavon."

With his constantly increasing fame, the price of his pictures has also slowly but steadily risen. J. van Ruisdael produced a great number of pictures. These pictures, as we have said, are rarely dated and, except for those belonging to his early manhood, it would be difficult to assign any exact date to them. In grouping them here, according to their subjects and the districts by which they were evidently inspired, we only mention those which seem to us the most remarkable.

J. van Ruisdael was not long absent from his native country, with the exception of the excursion to Norway. The Norwegian landscapes have an important place among his pictures. They all belong to the period of his maturity. The special characteristics of vegetation where the pine tree predominates, the enormous piles of rock, the violent contrast between their vivid colours and the



Jan van Goyen,
Landscape with Tavern, 1627/1629.
Oil on wood, 38.9 x 66.9 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Meindert Hobbema,
The Water Mill, 1692.
Oil on canvas, 80 x 66 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Philips Wouwerman,
Hunters and Horsemen by the Roadside, 1645-1655.
Wood, 36 x 34 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Allaert van Everdingen,
Hendrick Trip's Cannon Foundry at Julita Bruk, Södermanland, c.1645-1675.
Oil on canvas, 192 x 254.5 cm.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

whiteness of the foamy water, do not constitute subjects so favourable to the artist's style as one would have expected. Their very complexity finally produces monotony and J. van Ruisdael did not in all cases succeed in avoiding this.

Still less do his attempts to mingle, in the same work, characteristics borrowed from widely different countries. The placing together of these details seems all the more improbable and unnatural, because, as each one is rendered with extreme exactitude, it is all easier to trace its origin. As a natural consequence, one feels the lack of unity in the picture. This defect is never more forcibly apparent than in one of J. van Ruisdael's most celebrated productions, a picture which, in our opinion, is very wrongly considered one of his masterpieces. We refer to the painting known as *The Jewish Cemetery*. This picture probably belongs to the artist's last years and he has put into it the echo, as it were, of all the sadness with which his life was burdened. We can see in it the trace of a sentimentality from which he usually refrained, and it is due to this no doubt that the picture owes a great part of its fame. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe appreciated J. van Ruisdael's talent and had a special fondness for this painting, but the reasons he gives for this liking are literary rather than artistic. He was yielding to a current of ideas very much in vogue in the art criticism of the eighteenth century.

We now come to the purely Dutch landscapes in which we see all the artist's originality. In his views of cities he is certainly below other painters who have made a speciality of such subjects. However, as a painter of the sea, J. van Ruisdael is superior to all marine artists. In *The Tempest*, in the Louvre, we see the same violent contrasts which this thrilling subject demands, but this time the artist has not only painted the fury of the sea and the dangers with which it threatens the boats scattered over its waves. A little cottage, scarcely protected by stakes roughly fastened together, is exposed to the repeated assaults of the waves which break and fill the atmosphere with a salt moisture. Here the simplicity of the subject illustrates the grandeur of the scene.

In his beaches, J. van Ruisdael, in a somewhat different sense, is a worthy rival of Van de Velde. J. van Ruisdael saw those melancholy or terrible sea-effects, peculiar to the Dutch coast, as well as the charming scenery he painted, in the neighbourhood of Haarlem.

It is to J. van Ruisdael that we must turn for a more exact and penetrating interpretation of that picturesque scenery. On visiting the country around Haarlem, J. van Ruisdael's name





Salomon van Ruisdael,
River Landscape with Ferry, 1664.
Oil on wood, 50.1 x 69 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.



Jacob van Ruisdael,
Forest Lake with Two Swans.
Oil on canvas, 45.6 x 55.8 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.



occurs to one at every turn with the memory of one or another of his pictures. His wanderings can be traced, even the very place where he sat down to paint. The artist's originality appears, perhaps, to better advantage in those simpler subjects, with which, by sheer genius, he has made such effective pictures.

This same impression of struggle and of sadness we find again, still more eloquently rendered, in *The Bush*, one of J. van Ruisdael's most celebrated pictures, now in the Louvre. Although J. van Ruisdael was always inspired by melancholy scenery, he also sought his subjects in other parts of Holland. He rarely painted flowing rivers, as his uncle S. van Ruisdael and Van Goyen did. In the midst of the huge stretches of flat country in Holland, the slightest eminence assumes an extreme relief and dominates the whole district. It was no wonder, therefore, that landscapists were attracted there.

Eugène Fromentin, French painter and writer, wonders whether J. van Ruisdael sketched or painted from nature, whether he was merely inspired by it or whether he copied it directly. He might easily have answered these questions himself, as J. van Ruisdael has taken the trouble to inform us very clearly. His drawings supply us with valuable information as to his conscientiousness in consulting nature. His representations of downs, banks of canals, forests, groups of trees battered by the wind, cottages, ruins or mills drawn either in the Haarlem district or along the coast, are given with absolute truthfulness.

Both for his engravings and his pictures, the artist scrupulously consulted nature. As to painting and reproducing on the spot the real colours of his landscape, we do not think he ever did this. There is a striking contrast in his work between the absolute truthfulness of his drawing or values and the systematically conventional colours of his vegetation. Above everything he delighted in painting those grey days, either light or dark, which give distinctness to forms and to tones. Occasionally, it is true, he painted winter in all its sadness, showing us bare trees and yellowish reeds on the banks of a frozen canal; or the outskirts of a poverty-stricken village, covered with dirty, melting snow, with a few wretched cottages whose smoke is seen rising towards a sky flaked with clouds and darkening with approaching night. At other times, though rarely, he depicts night itself with its silence and mystery. Under the uncertain light of the moon, which is just rising over a hill, a pool is to be seen, with the moon's quivering reflection, or there is a slumbering hamlet, whose little houses are indistinctly visible through the trees.



Allaert van Everdingen,
Landscape with Waterfall.
Oil on canvas, 75.3 x 65.9 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Meindert Hobbema,
Entrance to the Forest.
Oil on wood, 60 x 84 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.



But such pictures are exceptions, and we generally find the same season and the same time of day: an afternoon at the beginning of autumn and rich vegetation, with those slightly golden tints which delighted him and which he excelled in rendering. Strangely enough, with the season and the light almost always the same, J. van Ruisdael's pictures were nevertheless ever new, for his compositions were so varied. As a matter of

Jan van Goyen,
Stop before an Inn, 1643.
Oil on wood, 33.6 x 44 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

fact, one scarcely thinks of his style. It is even difficult to discern all its merits, so little is it apparent in his concise, well sustained work. But there is nothing to equal the precision of his touch, which never shows the least trace of hesitation or weakness. Perhaps J. van Ruisdael's composition is better than his execution. Certainly the country which inspired him is very characteristic. In other places chance seems to reign supreme, for one seeks in vain any consecutive plan or order, whilst this country is in itself a work of art. Everything appears to be logical and to correspond to a definitely arranged plan. Among J. van Ruisdael's predecessors and contemporaries we find many who had also been inspired by its beauty, finding in its



scenery subjects similar to those he depicts. Besides Van Goyen and S. van Ruisdael, there are other landscapists who, either by birth or education, are connected with Haarlem. All these artists have a certain affinity with J. van Ruisdael, but when we compare them with him, we at once appreciate his perfection. All the qualities that we find here and there in their work, we find together in his and in a superior degree. Only too often the pictures of his fellow artists look as though they have just been cut haphazard out of nature, while each one of his forms a complete whole, the drawing precise, and the construction and distribution of masses excellent in effect. In order to be convinced of this, it is only necessary to go through his works

and to see how many there are which one could never forget, pictures in which he seems to have given us all the poetry of Holland, and it would be difficult to choose one among them as being better than another.

The fever of novelty which carried so many of his fellow-artists off to Italy never took possession of him. By roaming abroad

Adriaen van de Velde,
Shepherd and Shepherdess with their Flock at a Well, 1668.
Oil on wood, 20.4 x 25.8 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

and multiplying experiences, one is apt to become less thorough. J. van Ruisdael remained in his native land, and learnt to know all its aspects at all hours. Far from wearying of it, he discovered fresh beauties in it every day, and, if he left it for a short time, he returned only to love it more. Gradually, whether he knew it or not, he had learnt to add a new poetry to landscape painting. His lesson to his successors was not merely to seek to please the eye. Like Goethe a century later, he sought to obtain from the very heart of reality all the hidden poetry that it contains. Hitherto, in countries supposedly more picturesque, artists had endeavoured to bring together various scenic effects, and, by grouping them with more or less consistency, to obtain certain decorative results. Claude Lorrain had excelled in this better than anyone. With a perfection that was the despair of his imitators, he had expressed the grace of the idle sea caressing the steps of the old palaces, beneath the splendour of a Southern sky. He had also expressed the noble dignity of beautiful trees expanding in an ever serene atmosphere. J. van Ruisdael lived in the midst of a humbler and less clement nature. The sea in Northern countries, and particularly in Holland, is capable of terrible ferocity. Behind those poor barriers which are put up to withstand its fury, within those low-walled, badly-built cottages, anxious nights were frequently spent in keeping watch on an ever-threatening enemy. That muddy water of the Dutch rivers and streams was nothing less than the very soil of the country being taken up and washed away. The sand which forms the shores is blown up by the wind and scattered everywhere, carrying destruction before it. In this rough climate we do not find the soft, rounded outlines of the Italian trees, as depicted by the academic school after Claude, the ordinary tree of regular outline which can be moved about at will and used according to the needs of the composition. With the Dutch landscapist, each species has an individual expression, the result of the condition of growth, of the place to which it belongs. Like the trees, the ground and the grass, the most insignificant of the pictorial details have been fashioned by this particular place, where the ever active forces of nature govern and modify all forms, colours, and harmonies. Who would ever think of placing the heroes of history or fable in such a setting? The only human beings who could appear there – herdsman, peasants, fishermen or travellers – look pitiful and small. In J. van Ruisdael's best works they are scarcely visible, and in most of them they are entirely absent.

Thus, by a series of successive transformations, landscape painting reached its term of development. Man, who had formerly taken up the whole space in art, was gradually ousted by nature. At first the latter only appeared timidly, its grace or energy was most

frequently symbolised by certain approved themes. But gradually its importance increased, and the representations of nature became truer and more real. With J. van Ruisdael, the time had come when nature was sufficient in itself, when it was substituted for man, and when the latter disappeared from the scene completely. An art of this kind was opposed to all received traditions, and at that time was not appreciated. Long before J. J. Rousseau had aroused within us the sentiment of nature; J. van Ruisdael in his painting had given to it the most eloquent expression. In advance of his times, he was unappreciated in his own country, and, like Rembrandt, destined to die in want. A lover of the country, revelling in open air, he died in the sadness and isolation of the hospital. J. van Ruisdael was spared few hardships, and that Northern nature, whose melancholy and ruggedness he had so often depicted, accorded well with his own troubled existence of an artist, who, next to Rembrandt, and poor like him, was the greatest of Holland.

On reading the biographies of the Dutch painters of the great epoch one is struck by the painful contrast between their talent and their lot in life. Like J. van Ruisdael, Meindert Hobbema (1638-1709) was among these unappreciated men. For more than a century after his death, his name was never mentioned by any of the historians, and in order to sell his pictures, they had to be presented with fictitious names. Unscrupulous picture dealers or buyers obliterated his signature and substituted for it that of Ruisdael. Until the commencement of the nineteenth century, there was almost absolute silence so far as he was concerned.

All at once, in the middle of the nineteenth century, after a sale which had brought his gifts to light, Hobbema became the fashion. His pictures became requested, as much probably on account of their scarcity as their merit. Owing to this increasing fame and to these figures, certain speculators once more began their frauds, and Hobbema's signature became more frequent. It was to be seen again on works which it had formerly existed and also on those which had borne the name of Jacob van Ruisdael. The decision of the artist to accept a municipal post as a means of livelihood shows also very clearly how little he must have been earning by his art. According to all appearances, his works did not sell as well as those by J. van Ruisdael. For a few florins, works could then be obtained, signed by names which are at present famous. It is not, therefore, surprising that many of the Dutch masters had recourse to commerce or to some lucrative post as a means of existence as Van Goyen had speculated in houses and tulips, but not very successfully.

The post of Customs-Inspector in Amsterdam, which Hobbema held until his death, no doubt took up a considerable amount of his time,



Meindert Hobbema,
Peasant Huts Along a Stream.
Oil on wood, 19.3 x 22.7 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Landscape Painting





for, from the moment he accepted it, his pictures became rarer. As years went by the Hobbema family became still poorer and at the time of his wife's death in 1704, the artist was in dire straits. Five years later, Hobbema, who was then living in the Rozengracht, near Doolhof, nearly opposite the house where Rembrandt had lived, died in the same poverty as the latter. Opposite the inscription of the husband and wife on the death register is the brief significant mention: "Paupers' class".

The study of Hobbema's works is almost as difficult as the study of his life, for the signatures and dates of his pictures underwent so many alterations. According to Smith's *Catalogue Raisonné*, there are in all one hundred forty-five pictures by Hobbema, but this total should not be accepted without reserve. At the time when this

Jacob van Ruisdael,
Winter Landscape near Haarlem with a Lamppost.
Oil on canvas, 37 x 32 cm.
Städels-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Jan van Goyen,
Village Street with People Resting, 1628.
Oil on wood, 38.9 x 66.9 cm.
Städels-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Catalogue was compiled, Hobbema was already somewhat in vogue and art enthusiasts, anxious to take advantage of the fact, tended to increase the number of his works.

We can, however, affirm that Hobbema's development, like that of his master J. van Ruisdael, was very precocious. The dates which were formerly on pictures that have long been in well-known collections are proof of this. The number and quality of his pictures between 1663 and 1669 prove that this was the period of his greatest production. It would, therefore, be surprising that he should have accepted a post which would interfere with the exercise of his art, were we not to know the material difficulties with which he had then to contend.

There has been much discussion about which district Hobbema chose most frequently for the subjects of his landscapes. Charming as is the country scenery which he depicts, there is a certain monotony about his pictures. In certain of Hobbema's pictures there is too much uniformity of treatment, an excessive wealth of detail and, too frequently, an insignificance of motive. His admirers go too far when they attempt to compare him equally with J. van Ruisdael. It has even been claimed that Hobbema surpasses the latter. We venture to affirm that he is very inferior to his master.



Philips Wouwermans (copy),
Riders Before a Camp-Followers Tent.
Oil on wood, 34.6 x 30.1 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Philips Wouwermans,
Armed Riders in Front of an Inn.
Oil on copper, 18.4 x 25.2 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

He has neither J. van Ruisdael's fertility, his great art of composition, nor that force of sentiment and constant desire for perfection which placed J. van Ruisdael in the highest rank among the Dutch landscapists.

Yet it is only fair to say that some of Hobbema's works stand out from the rest by reason of their rare merit. These alone, in our opinion, deserve the admiration which people are apt to give to them all. *The Water Mill*, in the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, and *The Avenue, Middelharnis*, in the National Gallery in London, are works apart. The last two represent all of this artist's best qualities.

There is something strange about the composition of the *The Avenue, Middelharnis*. The road starts straight in front of us, dividing the canvas almost equally. The trees are arranged symmetrically with nothing but a poor cluster of foliage at the top. There are paralleled ditches along either side of the avenue and, finally, a plantation of rose trees and shrubs in straight rows. This is not a very picturesque arrangement, yet by sheer force of talent with so ordinary a motive. The picture is in an excellent state of preservation. Its fresh light and clear colouring retain a remarkable limpidity.

The Water Mill, if not of finer quality as regards to the painting, is a better composition and, in our opinion, Hobbema's masterpiece. The subject is taken from the district which most frequently inspired him, but the manner in which he has treated it gives it great originality. The group of trees in the foreground stands out vividly against the sky, and their outline, firm but not severe, frames the horizon, which is lit up with brilliant sunshine. Under this vivid light, the most trifling details are noted; an incisive, nervous touch, suitable to the objects that the artist wishes to represent. Hobbema reveals the diversity of forms and shades in these numerous details, giving the right quality to the colour and the delicate shades which distance lends to the various planes. He has multiplied these planes and made the light play gaily through the gaps in the foliage. All this is very freely executed with a full brush and with plenty of spirit. There is no trace of a wonderful feature of the picture. Lofty as it is in one part, it presents a striking contrast to the stronger colours with its beautiful pearly white cloud merging into pale blue. The figures, too, are excellent and so cleverly grouped that one has to look about in the various parts of the picture before discovering the fishermen seated on the banks, the peasants talking together, the workmen pursuing their occupations, and the gentleman with his long walking stick taking a stroll. The various animals are all natural, and are depicted in their most lifelike attitudes.





Jacob van Ruisdael,
Winter Landscape, c.1870-1875.
Oil on canvas, 37.3 x 46 cm.
Private collection.

We should attribute them to the taste and hand of Adriaen van de Velde. In any case, they certainly put the finishing touch to this masterpiece.

Eugène Fromentin has devoted an exquisite page to it and has not overrated its fascinating qualities. "*The Water Mill*," he says, "is a charming work; correct and firm in its construction; thoroughly well thought out; the colour strong and beautiful, the sky of a rare quality. Everything in it appears to have been skilfully under-painted and well over-painted afterwards. To use a well-known studio expression, "it pays for its frame."

It has even happened that on looking at J. van Ruisdael's *Bush*, close by, it has seemed yellowish, woolly, and somewhat soft in touch, and for a moment I have almost made the mistake of preferring Hobbema. Fortunately the impression did not last; such a mistake would be unpardonable even for a minute. "Nothing could be better expressed than this. When looking at *The Water Mill* one feels this admiration," so delicately worded by Fromentin, but one is not inclined to be faithless to J. van Ruisdael's *Bush*, nor to find it "yellowish, woolly, and somewhat soft in touch." It is inexplicable that an artist capable of painting the *Avenue*, *Middelharnis*, and *The Water Mill* should have produced so many inferior, commonplace, and insignificant works.

As we have said, Hobbema was neither as fertile nor as diverse in his work as J. van Ruisdael, but he nevertheless interpreted, with undeniable ability, certain phases of Dutch scenery which his master had neglected. He was more susceptible to pleasant impressions, and was not attracted by the wildness of the downs, nor by the sadness or fury of the sea. He delighted in depicting houses scattered over the plain, their red roofs contrasting with the sunlit verdure. Beautiful shady trees and running water completed the picture. It was by the merit and charm of a few of his best works that he eclipsed his numerous rivals; and it is by these works that he has been recognised as a true artist and given high rank in the Dutch school, though somewhat below his master. After Hobbema, we find neither such talent nor such truth and candour of impression. The monotony noticeable in some of Hobbema's work was the chief fault in the works of his successors. In their attempt to compromise between style and nature, they merely made use of everyday subjects that would be likely to please picture fanciers. The sap was exhausted. With the imitators, who spent their time copying each other, and introducing an exaggerated finish into their work, the Dutch school was about to disappear. It had lost its force and originality. Hobbema had appeared just as this

school was on the decline, and he was one of the last of its great landscapists.

Painters of the sea, beaches, and towns of Holland

The list of Dutch landscapists is already long, but it is still far from complete. Before speaking of Rembrandt, we must mention some of the more eminent of those artists who, by showing us the varied aspects of their country, have given us a clearer idea of it. Among such artists are the marine painters.

From the very commencement of the Dutch school, the sea had a considerable place in the works of its artists. This is, of course, only natural taking into account the important part it plays in the life of the nation. The sea was, to Holland, an enemy that had to be fought afresh every day. When once it was controlled by the tenacity of a courageous people, it became, at the time of the Dutch struggle with the foreigner, the safeguard of the country's independence. Then, after the peace, it was the principal element of the nation's prosperity. By devoting themselves exclusively to the painting of the sea, the Dutch masters created a new branch of art and a truly national one.

Willem van de Velde the Elder (c. 1611-1693) has left very few pictures and they are only second rate, yet he drew boats of all kinds very cleverly, and his ability in that line was so highly appreciated by his contemporaries that he was commissioned by the Dutch Admiralty to execute a large number of drawings representing sea fights. Willem the Elder's superiority in this kind of work was such that Charles II of England offered him the title of Painter to the King, with a good salary. He therefore settled in Britain. When James II came to the throne, he invited Willem the Elder to remain, and accordingly he lived in London until his death at the age of eighty. His eldest son, Willem the Younger, Adriaen's brother, after learning the rudiments of his profession from his father, entered Simon de Vlieger's studio.

Willem the Younger's scrupulous truthfulness in his work was very much appreciated by his fellow townsmen, and it was not only among painters that he found admirers. Sailors could testify to the absolute fidelity of his representations from a technical point of view. Familiar with everything connected with the sea, the Dutch would never have tolerated any erroneous or superficial treatment of that subject. Willem the Younger's knowledge enabled him to satisfy the most exacting of his critics. In one of his early works, a sea-piece dated 1653, he has expressed very happily the impression given by the absolute calm which is so rare on the



North Sea. Admirably grouped boats lift their sails high in the air and not a breath of wind swells them. The still water reflects them with perfect distinctness. The softness of the colour, the dampness of the atmosphere, the charm of that light which tones down the outlines – everything, in this exquisite work, bears witness to an attentive and intelligent study of nature.

This was one of the subjects that Willem the Younger preferred, and he repeated it with great success. It can be seen in the seascapes of the National Gallery in London, in pictures at the National Maritime Museum; in *Calm Sea* in the Alte Pinakothek;

Salomon van Ruisdael,
Dutch Canal with Fishing Boats.
Oil on wood, 39.9 x 60.3 cm.
Städels-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

and in several pictures in the Rijksmuseum. He excelled equally in the more stormy aspects of the sea, peculiar to Holland. In the Louvre, there is a very good specimen of those breezes which are so frequent amongst his works. The correct if somewhat cold execution is singularly true to nature. One seems to feel the pureness of the fresh air blowing through space and causing the boats to bend over the greyish waves. It makes the waves rise higher and higher and drives the light clouds before it until they float away or vanish into the pale blue of the sky.

Those who do stop, however, are fascinated by it, and it certainly gives an idea of the artist's correct and, at the same time, sober talent. He has rarely painted storms, and his steady, conscientious temperament does not seem quite suitable for tempests. Nevertheless he has occasionally treated them, and always with the same truthfulness, the result of his keen observation.



A Dutch Merchant Ship Running Between Rocks in Rough Weather and *The Gathering Tempest* are excellent examples of this kind.

Besides the purely picturesque aspects of the sea that Willem the Younger had to paint for collectors, he was commissioned to depict some of the most glorious feats of war of the Dutch navy. Associated with his father in the official mission confided to the latter by the Admiralty, he was able to take advantage of these nautical expeditions for his studies. It is said that Michiel De Ruyter, who had great respect for him, had some of the cannons of the Admiral's boat fired specially for him. This is, at any rate, the subject of *The Cannon Shot*. Here, Willem the Younger represents a great calm with a huge warship, whose sails, lit up by the sun, stand out distinctly amidst the thick smoke produced by the discharge of the ship's guns.

After the departure of the elder Willem for England, his son kept up regular contact with him. King Charles II, on seeing some of the works he sent to his father, was so struck with their merit that he wanted to also engage him in his service. By a decree issued on the 16th of February, 1675, he granted each of the two artists an annual sum equivalent to about £100. From that time the younger Willem also took up his abode in England. His success, both at Court and among the members of the aristocracy, increased continually. His works were very much in demand and high prices were paid for them. There are many of his pictures now in St. James's Palace, Hampton Court, and in private collections.

Willem van de Velde the Younger,
A Storm Arises.
 Oil on canvas, 129.5 x 189.2 cm.
 Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio.



Jacob van Ruisdael,
The Jetty or Stormy Weather over a Dyke in Holland, also known as *A Storm*,
c.1670.
Oil on canvas, 110 x 160 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Among the most important and the most remarkable of his works are the two seapieces once belonging respectively to Lord Lindsay and to the Wallace collection. The dimensions of the latter are such that the artist has been able to give, with the minutest exactness, every detail of the construction and tackle of the numerous boats.

Although living in England, younger Willem returned more than once to his own country. In 1686, he stayed there some time, and, during the visit, he painted a *Harbour View of Amsterdam* taken from the Y waterway, for the Boatmen's Corporation. This picture is the largest of his that we know, measuring some 1.8 metres by 3 metres. It represents a panorama of the city with its port, its docks, and its principal buildings. In the centre is the merchant ship, returning from one of its first voyages to the East Indies. It is being welcomed back by salutes from the boats at anchor, and the city yacht, magnificently decorated, is advancing to meet it. The more vivid colouring of this picture, the broader and more animated handling are in perfect harmony with its dimensions and with the subject treated. Willem the Younger soon went back to England, and James II, on his accession, continued the pension granted by his predecessor. He therefore went on with his work for the Admiralty, and, as he lived at Greenwich, he had every opportunity to pursue his studies. He died there on the 6th of April, 1707, at the age of seventy-four, and is buried there.

Willem van de Velde the Younger's drawings have always been in demand, and they command fairly high prices. Besides these drawings, which form the best part of his work, there are those which he did for the purpose of the official work with which he was entrusted, and their number proves that this commission was no sinecure. The collection, once in the Rotterdam Museum, included at least 624 pictures, and some of these drawings are more than 2.7 metres in length. They are chiefly sketches of naval battles drawn from life, or pictures of the various ships. Among the latter is one with the inscription: *Myn gallijott* (my boat). It represents the boat, which was placed at the disposal of the artist by the Admiralty, for taking him to places from which he could see the episodes he intended to portray to the best advantage.

Besides these seapieces painted by specialists, there are also others by landscapists such as Van Goyen, Everdingen, Salomon and Jacob van Ruisdael, who, with their broader and freer handling, show a more elevated sense of nature. In England, Willem van de Velde the Younger is generally considered to be the first among marine painters. It is only fair to add, however, that he had a rival, about whose life Abraham Bredius gives us some valuable information, which he obtained from the Dutch Records. Jan van de Cappelle was an amateur painter, whose main



Willem van de Velde the Younger,
Stormy Sea with Ships.
Oil on wood, 34.5 x 30.2 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.



occupation was the care of the important dyeing works which together with his brothers and sisters he had inherited from his father. Van de Cappelle was born in 1624 or 1625 in Amsterdam. On September 12th, 1653, he married Annetje Jansdr. On the tenth of June, 1666, his wife "being ill and in bed," they both made a will, leaving to each other the half of the fortune of which they could dispose. They were at that time living in Koestraat. Thirteen years later, on the third of September, 1679, Van de Cappelle, then a widower, "ill and in bed, but in full possession of all his faculties," bequeathed to his children all that he had. Besides the dye-works, this consisted of many houses, land, gardens and securities, whose value, either in money or in shares, amounted to 92,720 florins, which was considered a very large fortune at the time. Soon after this, on the 22nd of September, 1679, he was buried at the Nieuwe Kerk. The inventory taken at his death is very instructive, and the detailed list of the pictures, drawings, and engravings left by him proves both the importance of the collection and the dignity of his taste. The special preference of Van de Cappelle is shown by the large quantity of pictures he possessed by the most celebrated marine painters of his time.

Occupied very much at first by the management of the dyeing works, Van de Cappelle could not study from nature as often as he would have liked, but he employed his leisure time in copying the works of Jan Porcellis and of Simon de Vlieger. The inventory also mentions a certain number of these copies, chiefly from Vlieger. If, therefore, Van de Cappelle were not the pupil of the latter, he was at any rate influenced by him. As time went on, impelled by his passion for painting, he arranged to have more leisure, in order to learn from nature what she alone could teach him. His progress is very evident. The effects of light and shade in calm weather chiefly attracted him, and consequently he excelled in depicting them. The study of light and shade, at that time very general in the Dutch school, acquired a strongly individual character in Van de Cappelle's work. He did not, like his brother artists, give a large space to the shade with boldly accentuated contrasts between the values, but looked for the mystery in the light itself. Half veiled by light clouds, the sun diffuses its brightness everywhere, so that the slightest things become, as it were, impregnated and transfigured. The effects of transparent mist in the still air are peculiar to Holland, and lend to the sea, when it is quiet under a tranquil sky, a sort of idealistic poetry, which Van de Cappelle endeavoured to express. Without

Aert van der Neer,
River Bank with Cattle.
Oil on wood, 33 x 25.5 cm.
Städels-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

violent contrasts, and even without any great effort to vary his compositions, he rendered them fascinating. The perspective is delicately but faultlessly indicated by almost imperceptible transitions, leading to the distances which are lost to sight in a radiant mirage. Everything is calm, and there is scarcely a ripple on the water, which reflects the gilded whiteness of the motionless sails. The impression of immensity and of quiet splendour which emanates from this serene atmosphere is the real characteristic of Van de Cappelle's talent.

Besides these seapieces, Van de Cappelle also painted a few winter effects, but, although remarkable, these have not the same originality. They remind one of similar works by Esaias van de Velde, Hendrick Avercamp, and Aert van der Neer, specimens of which Van de Cappelle possessed in his collection. With the artists we have just mentioned, the brilliant period of marine painting, considered as a special branch of art, died away, and was followed by a rapid and decided deterioration.

The sheets of water, which cover immense stretches of country in the lowlands of Holland, have more than once tempted the brush of landscapists. Van Goyen and Salomon van Ruisdael, among others, depicted in some of their best works the melancholy aspect of all this water, while Aert van der Neer (c. 1603-1677), a painter of rare talent, made it the exclusive subject of his pictures. As a rule the space occupied by the dry land is reduced to a narrow strip, which, whilst separating the vast expanse of sky and of water, gradually diminishes until it disappears in the horizon. With such elementary simplicity of subject, the interest is concentrated in the movement of the sky and in the water which reflects it. In spite of these restrictions, Van der Neer succeeds in obtaining very poetic compositions, varied by effects of light and by the arrangement of the picturesque details – trees, villages, boats, figures, or animals – which he introduces. The observation contained in *Les Maitres d'autrefois* (Old Masters) seems to be especially applicable to him. Fromentin writes:

Every Dutch painting is concave; I mean that it is composed of curves drawn around a point determined by the interest. It is composed of circular shadows around a dominating light. The point of interest is drawn, coloured, and shines like an orb. It has a solid foundation, a top that disappears, and rounded corners converging to the centre. Consequently, it is of considerable depth, and the distance seems great between the eye and the objects that are reproduced. No painting carries us along more surely from the foreground to the background, from the frame to the horizon. One lives in it, moves in it, looks down



and up, and is inclined to scan the sky. Everything lends itself to this illusion, the perspective of the sky, the perfect harmony of colour and values with the perspective in which the object is placed.

Such is the subject treated most frequently by Van der Neer. He did not commence painting until very late. His first pictures date from 1636 to 1638, and as he was born in Amsterdam in 1604, he was then 32 to 34 years of age. In his youth he had been in the service of the Lords of Arkel, and the whole of his life he was poor. As he did not earn sufficient money by painting, he became

an innkeeper, but in this he did not succeed any better, and, like many other Dutch artists, he died in extreme poverty.

Van der Neer also painted a number of winter effects, animated by a crowd of people amusing themselves in various ways on the ice. What he preferred were the few minutes of twilight, in which the vigorous outlines of the land and of the trees stand out strongly against the gold of the setting sun, whilst in the rest of the landscape, already invaded by the shadows, the details mingle and gradually fade away. The sky alone preserves its brilliancy, and the clouds, gathered together after their great combat, break and disappear, forming a kind of halo around the radiant disc of the sun, which is just sinking behind the horizon.

Fascinated by such sights, whose majesty increased with the decline of daylight, Van der Neer would frequently stay out until

Jan Vermeer van Delft,
View of Delft, c.1660-1661.
Oil on canvas, 96.5 x 115.7 cm.
Royal Picture Gallery, Mauritshuis, The Hague.



nightfall. Forgetful of time, he would stay out noting the fleeting impressions of every minute, and the following day, in his wretched studio, he would translate the mystery and the solemn calm by one of those night effects. Van der Neer's drawings show an admirable comprehension of light and shade, and the most delicate variations of light rendered with great accuracy and sureness of touch. The landscapists were not the only artists tempted by the various aspects of Dutch scenery. There were others still more curious and more sensitive to all its picturesque beauties. These artists could not resist the temptation of leaving their usual kind of work in order to apply their talent to very different tasks.

A Haarlem painter, Philips Wouwerman (c.1619-1668), is known by his too numerous pictures representing battles, skirmishes, hunting-parties, cavalcades, and riding school scenes. His somewhat commonplace imagination has full scope in such subjects. Now and

then he abandoned his usual, monotonous style, and painted a few landscapes, with more real and original feeling than he put into his other works; among such pictures are *Path Through the Dunes*. He also gives us some winter effects. One of these effects proves that he did really individual work, and that it was inspired by nature. The country is buried under the snow, and a faint smoke is rising from the chimneys of the wretched huts into the air, which is still laden with hoarfrost. In this picture one feels that the impression is more sincere, for the artist succeeds in communicating to us an emotion to which we are not accustomed in his works. It is one of rare perfection and is in a state of excellent preservation.

Jan van der Heyden,
Loenersloot Castle in Holland, 17th century.
Oil on wood, 22 x 29 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.



Gerrit Adriaenszoon Berck-Heyde,
View of Haarlem, c.1670.
Oil on canvas, 89.5 x 151 cm.
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Jan Vermeer van Delft,
Street in Delft ("Het Straatje"), c.1657-1658.
Oil on canvas, 54.3 x 44 cm.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

The Dutch School, so late in coming to perfection, had not, and could not have had, any other objective than that of "giving the portrait of Holland." This, it certainly did most faithfully and completely. It has not only given us lifelike pictures of its sky, its sea, its low plains, and its downs, but there have been special painters for its cities. Such artists depict for us the squares, the narrow streets, the massive buildings and the houses, almost always alike, along the banks of its silent canals. Job Berckheyde (1630-1698) and Gerrit Berckheyde (1638-1698) give us true views of Haarlem and of Amsterdam in a wan light. Jan van der Heyden (1637-1712) gives us some smaller pictures of these cities from around the same dates.

One artist among those we have mentioned has left us a few landscapes. We refer to Johannes Vermeer (c.1632-1675) of Delft, who is chiefly known now as a painter of imaginative pictures. The Dutch artists who depicted the society of their times are just as exact in the pictures they give us of the homes in which they introduce us to their models. With them we see all kinds of respectable interiors, in which he shows us his models; housewives, painters, musicians, savants, and lace-makers, all busy with their various occupations. These various works are remarkable. Vermeer, as a landscapist, is perhaps superior to the painter of imaginary episodes. In spite of the extreme simplicity of the subject, *The Little Street* is a marvel of truthfulness and accuracy. It is simply a narrow street in front of a red brick house, with the gabled front standing out against the sky; but the harmony of this humble motive is so familiar and so expressive that in this unpretentious picture the artist gives us a typical resume of the tranquil aspect of little Dutch towns, in their desolation and silence. The *View of Delft from the Rotterdam Canal* is more important and shows us better still this artist's rare qualities. It attracts attention, among all the pictures near it, by its luminous brightness, its strength and its modernity – features which no other picture in this school possesses in an equal degree. By the side of this *View of Delft*, with its strong colour scheme, all the others seem dull and lifeless. The sky of intense blue, the white clouds, the clear water, the gleaming beach, the gilded or dark walls, the roofs of blue slate or of red tiles; all these full, vibrating tones, which separately would seem excessively daring, blend with each other and mingle in a harmony that is both brilliant and delicate. It is a veritable feast for the eye of an artist, and each time that one sees it, it is a new wonder. Such a subject, absolutely devoid of literary interest, is only of value on account of its powerful handling. It seems strange that it should appeal to us so strongly, without the least vestige of any idea being connected with it, but the fact that the artist should have seen so clearly and have painted so truthfully proves his true value.





In spite of his ability, Vermeer had difficulty in selling his pictures even for low prices, and his life was passed in poverty, with constant anxiety caused by his debts. He was born at Delft in 1632, and he scarcely ever moved from the town over which, in spite of its peaceful aspect, such tragic memories hover. The terrible explosion in which Carel Fabritius, Vermeer's professor, was a victim in 1654 took place in Delft. Poor as he always was, the artist had nothing for which to thank fate. When he died in 1675, his widow was obliged to sell some of his pictures at a ridiculous price in order to pay a baker's bill. Vermeer's name, as we see, ought to be added to the long list of martyrs, a list which would include so many of the most illustrious representatives of the Dutch School.

Rembrandt's Landscapes

Great as the talent of the landscapists of whom we have just spoken may have been, we must acknowledge that their special branches were rather restricted. The aspect of the sea and of the Dutch towns which they depicted certainly had many picturesque qualities, but, by keeping to these subjects, they ran the risk of wearying themselves by perpetual repetition and of failing to find sufficient fresh interest. Artists with higher aims, who are masters of all phases of their art, are better able to appeal to us and to make a greater impression upon us.

Like most of the great artists, when Rembrandt (1606-1669) began landscape painting he conferred upon his pictures the stamp of his own originality and genius. His life is so well known that we do not need to repeat it. Landscape painting did not at first appeal to him, and in his early pictures he did not attempt to depict nature. He was entirely absorbed by figure painting, and the figures in his compositions were more often than not in interiors where the intervention of light and shade was his chief preoccupation. When by any chance outdoor scenery was the framework for any of his episodes, the artist did not go to much trouble in studying it. In *The Baptism of the Eunuch* (1626) he contents himself with a bush and a piece of ground, over which two gourds, studied specially for the purpose, spread their wide leaves.

Towards the end of 1631 Rembrandt left Leiden for Amsterdam. Landscape was still only of secondary importance to him in his pictures and etchings, but when he required a few picturesque details he went to the country to copy them. He was always more at ease with subjects in which he could make use of his observations of light and shade, and such subjects of study he could easily find. There is an exception, however, to this in that lifelike and moving picture, representing a tempest with the waves in wild fury, which gives such eloquence to his interpretation of *St. Peter's Boat*.



Rembrandt (Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn),
The Angel Raphael Leaving Tobit and His Family, 1637.
Oil on oak, 66 x 52 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Rembrandt (Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn),
Stormy Landscape, c.1640.
Oil on wood, 51.3 x 71.5 cm.
Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Brunswick.



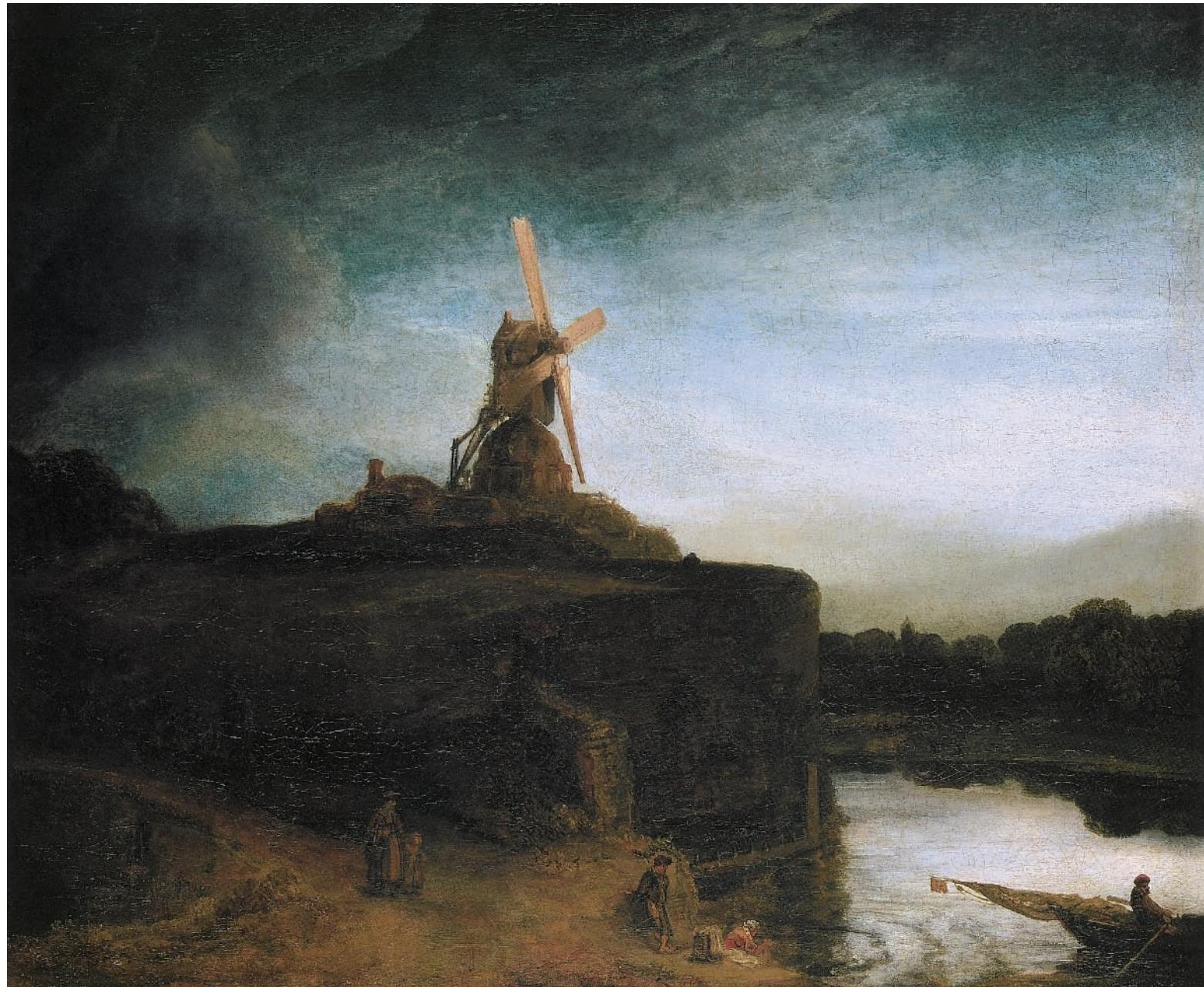
Few and restrained as were these glimpses of nature in his works, they were to disappear entirely for some time. This period of his life was filled with his passion for Saskia van Uylenburg.

He scarcely left home after his marriage, and it was either from memory or from sketches collected in his portfolios that he composed the picturesque background of *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*, of 1634. The opening of the heavens, the trembling of the trees, the agitation of the terrified shepherds, and the wild rush

of the flocks are the most eloquent commentary on the words of the angel who proclaims the coming of Christ. Rembrandt consulted nature so little at this period that in his admirable picture *Archangel Raphael Leaving the Family of Tobias* (1637) in the Louvre, he borrowed the vine with which he festoons the door of Tobias' dwelling from one of his earliest works, *St. Jerome Praying*. On the other hand, it was perhaps during a stay in the country, necessitated by Saskia's health, that he painted *The Carpenter's Household* (1640), now also in the Louvre, and for this he must certainly have studied nature. There is under a luminous sky, seen from the window, the tranquil horizon of a little village half hidden in verdure.

Rembrandt (Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn),
Three Trees, 1643.
Etching, 21.2 x 28.3 cm.
Department of Prints and Drawings, Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

When Saskia died, less than a year after the birth of Titus, Rembrandt's grief drove him to the country, in the hope that he would find calm in this retreat, and it was at this time that he really



began his first studies of landscape. The quantity of works by landscapists which he had collected proves his taste for them. Yet for a long time it seems as if his preferences were divided between the two most opposite styles of the Dutch school of that period. He had been brought up by his teachers under the influence of academic traditions, but at the same time he appreciated the merits of innovators, who had just opened up the true path for this school. Rembrandt's first landscapes were not remarkable for their simplicity. On the contrary, we see, by the details he introduces, his bias for what was then called the grand style.

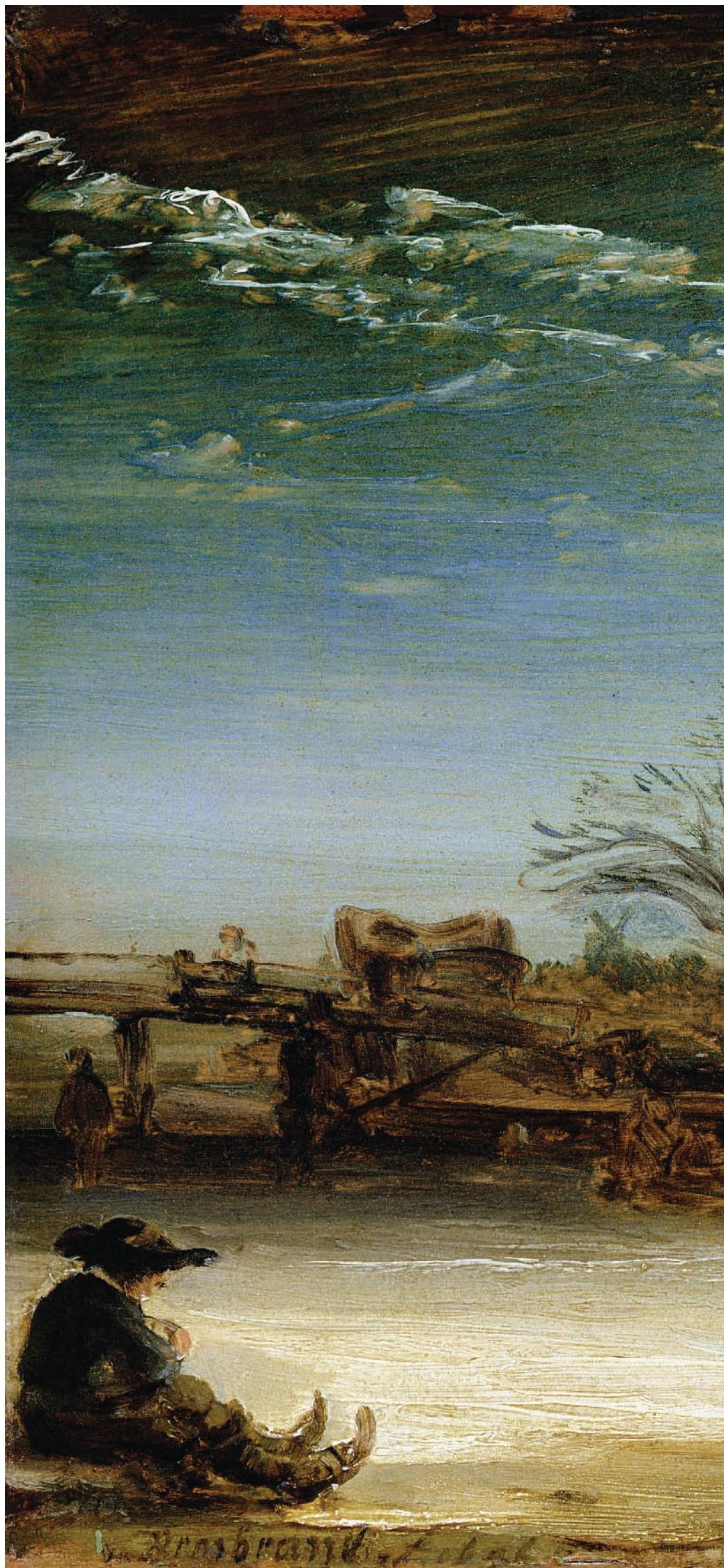
It would be in vain to attempt to discover where he found the subject of *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee*¹, which he painted about 1640. The scene evidently originated in the mind of the artist, who gave free play to his imagination, seeing in such a

subject a pretext for those contrasts of light and shade in which he delighted. Thick clouds are rising to the right of the picture, covering the sky and lowering on the horizon; water is gushing forth on all sides, flowing down the slopes in torrents which rush against each other furious and foaming. The mountains seem to be climbing, grouping themselves and mingling with each other in this rough country. It seems as if in these pictures Rembrandt were making up for his stay-at-home habits. It was whilst painting that he travelled in imaginary countries as it pleased his fancy. Instead of

**Rembrandt (Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn),
The Mill, 1645-1648.**
Oil on canvas, 87.6 x 105.6 cm.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Landscape Painting

**Rembrandt (Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn),
Winter Landscape, 1646.
Oil on wood, 17 x 23 cm.
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Museen Kassel, Kassel.**





the immense plains before him, he piled up mountain on mountain, and, instead of the brilliant green of Dutch meadows and trees, he painted yellowish-red tints. The same contrasts, and the same magic of chiaroscuro, with similar accumulation of detail, may be seen in the *Landscape with the Good Samaritan* and in another, *Landscape with an Obelisk*². Both are dated 1638. In these incoherencies, in this mixture of imitation and of imagination, and also in this strict observation of the play of light, we realise the hesitation of the artist, equally powerless to escape from the reality he has before him and from the visions that haunt him.

Just about this time, either because he felt the inadequacy of his study from nature or because he now had more time to devote himself to it, he began to realise its charm. His drawings and etchings began to testify to impressions sincerely felt, and were quite unlike other compositions he was painting at the same time. When face to face with nature, he was content with the very simplest subjects. He was sensitive to the beauty to be found in them, and he endeavoured to depict it with all the artlessness of a child. Everything now became a subject of study, and he went about with a notebook in which to set down his impressions. In the outskirts of Amsterdam he also found subjects which appealed to him: a hedge, some docks, a few cottages surrounded by large trees, the perspective of a village or the distant steeples of the city itself rising above the horizon.

In his paintings, the localities are as vague and uncertain as they are decided in these sketches. The trees show great inexperience, their outline against the sky at first being nothing but a shapeless daub, always the same, and as though painted according to some given formula; but he soon began to realise the advantage of these picturesque details for his compositions. In a drawing, no doubt executed about the year 1635, by the side of some trees of uniform outline and no special character, there is the stump of an old willow which Rembrandt introduced later into his *View of Omval* (1645). Gradually the etchings in which he made use of his sketches, and also those which he etched directly from nature, became more numerous. Rembrandt's *Mill* shows increasing firmness and precision in the drawing. It is true that vegetation of any kind is lacking, but the aspect of the warped and time-worn buildings is clearly indicated. In the *Cottage on the Outskirts of a Wood* there is the same sobriety. A more attentive study of vegetation is evident, and a true effect is obtained by very simple means.

In the celebrated etching known as *The Three Trees* (1643), Rembrandt shows all his talent as a master of landscape. In this striking picture everything expresses struggle. The spirited execution and the bold contrasts are in keeping with the character of this wild scenery. A significant detail reveals to us

the passionate energy with which Rembrandt covered his plate. In the middle of the clouds are vague indications of heads and bodies mingled together, and evident traces of some other sketch previously begun, which he had not taken the time to efface. Picking up the first plate which came to hand, he had eagerly recorded his impressions.

From this time, his simplest sketches could be recognised. He gives us, in a few strokes, an idea of the inexhaustible diversity of nature, at the same time preserving for each of his pictures its own special individuality. In the year 1645, we find in three of his etchings subjects that are totally unlike, but each expressed with equal sincerity.

One of these pictures, *Six's Bridge*, had, as the title indicates, a legend, and this, like so many others, was probably invented in the eighteenth century. According to it, Rembrandt was staying at Hillegom in the house of Burgomaster Six, and did this picture whilst at luncheon waiting for the mustard, which the domestic servant had gone to fetch from the village. It would be impossible to render one of the most characteristic aspects of Holland with more accuracy and ease. There is the plain, stretching out as far as the eye can see, shallow water, and sailing boats which, in the distance, look as if they are floating over meadows. All this is noted rapidly with equal charm and decision. In the *View of Omval*, the great artist appears again to have used an old plate on which something had been previously sketched. By the side of the willow stump, of which we have already spoken, he had drawn a young man crowning with flowers a girl who is seated near him, both figures being under the shade of the trees. Partially covering this first work, he has joined it, towards the right, with a background sketched in lightly, representing a village, supposedly Omval, with houses, quays, and windmills along the Amstel. The two parts of the picture, cleverly arranged in this way, do not give the idea that they were put together as an afterthought, and then finished with the reeds, clover, and grasses of all kinds that decorate the foreground.

Rembrandt, as we see, was gradually familiarising himself with landscape painting, and from this time forth we see less of the contrast, so noticeable in his early work, between the incoherence of his imaginative pictures and the absolute sincerity of his direct studies from nature. A small panel in the Staatliche Museen in

Rembrandt (Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn),
The Bark (Boat) of Peter or Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee, 1633.
Oil on canvas, 161.7 x 129.8 cm.
Whereabouts unknown since the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum robbery in 1990.





Kassel, entitled *Winter Landscape*, signed and dated 1646, is a sketch from nature, representing with perfect truthfulness a simple subject that he had painted in a few minutes. The impression of cold light on a winter afternoon is rendered with remarkable spirit, and in naturalness of effect this little sketch equals one of the great artist's best etchings. He was now of mature age and in full possession of the resources of his art, and he found in these fascinating studies fresh youth and opportunities for new progress. He saw nature through a poet's eyes, while he now had the ability of a great master for interpreting what he saw.

After the period of overwhelming grief caused by Saskia's death, Rembrandt had once more taken up his work, which from henceforth became a necessity to him. He no doubt realised now the benefit he had obtained from his studies of nature and

Philips Koninck,
Dutch Landscape.
Oil on wood, 71.7 x 117.2 cm.
Städel-Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

the deeper interest which such studies gave to his compositions. The years that followed were among the most fertile of his career. Having rarely gone out, he had not cultivated the friendship of his fellow-artists, but, hermit as he was, he enjoyed the society of landscapists, and a common love of nature had gradually drawn him to Berchem and to Jan Asselijn. Other landscapists, more essentially Dutch, he also knew very well. Additionally, Rembrandt greatly appreciated Hercules Seghers (c.1589-1638), whose talent gives him a claim to be reckoned among the pioneers of the Dutch school. In his pictures and engravings this artist gives us prototypes of those picturesque subjects which Rembrandt and one of his pupils, Philips Koninck (1619-1688) subsequently affected. They were composed of panoramic views with immense stretches of water, and plains relieved by light and shade. Rembrandt's contact with these various landscapists, and his appreciation of their works, prove his love of nature. In spite of the care for accuracy which his studies show, he continued to occasionally draw upon his imagination and to group the elements that he accumulated in the most fantastic way.



The last of these landscapes, *The Mill*, is certainly the masterpiece of the series and the final attempt of Rembrandt to unite, in the same work, his fidelity to nature and his poetical aspirations. The subject was perhaps imaginary, but the arrangement is not obvious, and the whole appears to have been taken directly from nature. Near a stream of water and dominating a hillock, the windmill, with a few cottages nearby, stands out proudly, its strong outline seen against a stormy sky. The sun has disappeared, but its last rays gild the great sails of the mill. The water, the banks and the background, already invaded by the evening shadows, are beginning to grow indistinct. Nothing stirs, and it seems as if, in the silence of the approaching night, nothing could be heard but the faint splash of the water against a boat fastened to the shore. The few well chosen details add to the pervading melancholy of the impression.

One sees from this picture that Rembrandt's study had borne fruit. From that time he dared to be simple, and, without having recourse to complex artifices, his inspirations are drawn from nature alone. His drawings and etchings prove this, and at no time in his life did he consult nature with more constancy and sincerity. Wherever he

wandered, the aspect of his native land appealed to him. It was late that he succeeded in throwing off the influence of his masters, that somewhat superstitious respect for tradition and style which led him to copy the works of the Italianisers, but when he once began to look at the scenery around him, he studied it with absolute conscientiousness and sincerity. He never left his own country, and even in Holland he does not seem to have gone far afield, nor to have varied his excursions greatly. Rembrandt frequently returned to the same places, while, for the human face, he took the same models several times over, himself included. He would carefully consider the same subject in search of the best point of view, or take the same view at various distances, in order to present a more exact idea of forms and effects. Under the infinite variety of the aspects of nature, he thus endeavoured to discover the significant features which determine the characteristics of a landscape.

Hercules Seghers,
Broad Valley Landscape with Rocks, c.1620-1630.
Oil on canvas, transferred on panel, 55 x 99 cm.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.



Chapter 4

Landscape in the Spanish and French Schools





Francisco de Goya y Lucientes,
Saint Isidro's Prairie (detail), 1788.
Oil on canvas, 441.9 x 90.8 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.
(p. 120-121)

Diego Velázquez,
Philip IV on Horseback, 1628-1635.
Oil on canvas, 303 x 317 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

The Spanish School

A Late Blooming

The Dutch school had come into being with the Independence of Holland and had "developed with the prosperity of the nation." Strangely enough, at the other extremity of Europe, the full perfection of the Spanish school coincided with the gradual decline of Spain. Absorbed by their stubborn struggle with the Moors, the kings of Spain had had little leisure for encouraging the fine arts. When Charles V decided to increase the glory of his reign by surrounding himself with the masterpieces of the most celebrated artists, it was from Flanders and Italy that he obtained those works which are still the ornament of the Prado Museum today.

Spanish painting must, therefore, have commenced somewhat late, and its progress was slow. Gradually, by the side of imitations of the Italian, a few native attempts at religious art made their appearance. These pictures were quite in harmony with popular sentiments at that period, and nature had but an insignificant place in them. Grave and exact, Zurbarán expressed the sombre enthusiasm of cloister life in a powerful way. There is, however, a very limited horizon in his works. We get a glimpse of sky or of some quiet courtyard, but with no sign of vegetation. We must not look for the gentle piety of St. Francis of Assisi, who saw a friend in nature. To Zurbarán, nature seemed to be an enemy, our enjoyment of it blameworthy, and its snares dangerous. The soul, he thought, must resist and consider the sacrifice and renunciation of all worldly things as a way of salvation. It was in such austere subjects that Spanish art found its themes.

Almost simultaneously, Diego Velázquez was to mark out new paths for art. He was born in 1599 in Seville. As a child, he received a good education and his early penchant for painting was unopposed. From his early youth he was devoted to nature, and during his whole life he turned to it for instruction. He adopted a method very much in vogue at that time in Spain, which consisted of respecting the individual tastes of the pupils and giving them various objects to copy in order to make better compositions. The resources which such means of expression put into his hands can easily be imagined.

With his talent, the ease with which he painted, and the exquisite distinction of his work, he was well prepared for all tasks that came to hand. The death of Philip III soon supplied him with a field of action worthy of his efforts. He set out for Madrid and was entrusted with the commission to paint an equestrian portrait of Philip IV. His royal model appointed Velázquez Court painter.

Besides portraits of the members of the royal family and the great personages of the Court, he was expected to paint those of the



Francisco de Goya y Lucientes,
La Novillada, 1779-1780.
Oil on canvas, 259 x 136 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

jesters, dwarfs, and aberrations of all kinds, such as the despotic monarchs of Spain kept around them at that period. The artist shows them all to us, studied with the same conscientiousness and equal scrupulous truthfulness. In order to give full value to these pictures, he had to recourse to nature as a background for the figures. He does not attempt those forced contrasts so frequently employed by his predecessors, and from which his own earlier work is not exempt, nor does he give gloomy skies, easily arranged draperies, and other traditional accessories so much in vogue for emphasising the brilliance of the flesh tints. In place of all this, he ventures boldly on the formidable problem of outdoor backgrounds. Although his grey, green, brown, or bluish tones are not at all vivid, they relieve the flesh tints of his models most satisfactorily, and give to them an added freshness. The contrasts of these various shades are so well distributed that the balance is admirably maintained and the general effect of the whole picture enhanced. The landscapes which serve as a background to these State portraits are very real, and at the same time very Spanish.

Velázquez represents Philip IV in the midst of the high Castilian marshlands, near a stream of water which winds along the wooded plains. The King holds the staff of command in his hand and is mounted on one of those fine Andalusian steeds. Another equestrian portrait is that of the Infante Don Baltazar Carlos, painted about 1635. The boy is represented galloping across vast plains that are bounded on the horizon by snow-covered mountains. He knows that this great country will someday be his. The atmosphere is mild, and the deep blue sky, broken by a few white clouds, seems to be smiling on the royal child. Not long after, when the boy was scarcely seventeen years of age, he died suddenly of a malignant fever.

Whenever it was possible, Velázquez had recourse to this intervention of nature. Not only did it appeal to his particular taste, but it allowed him also to reconstitute the composition of old mythological subjects. Velázquez ignores all academic formulas, and does not draw his inspirations from any of the work of the Italian masters before him. Nature alone supplied him with the material for his picture of *The Topers*, in which he glorifies, in his own way, Bacchus, the god of all kinds of intoxication. The leaden sky, the country around, and the slopes on which the generous wine was brought to perfection – all this is very Spanish, and he depicts it with a somewhat savage roughness, which suits the period when transposed to these surroundings.

From the very beginning of his career he had steadily pursued his own course, and with such genuine talent nothing could affect his originality. When Rubens, then at the very height of his fame, arrived in Spain, Velázquez was placed at the service of his illustrious brother-artist by the King. He probably treated Rubens

with all the deference due to his genius, but he was not in any way influenced by him. It is interesting to think of the two artists, riding along together to El Escorial in the famous excursion they made. This wild, lonely country filled Rubens with horror. The rich meadows and golden harvests of Flanders were much more to his taste. Velázquez, on the contrary, loved these rugged summits, and more than once, in his pictures, he has given us their snowy peaks and their harsh atmosphere as backgrounds.

The great Antwerp artist did not exercise any influence over the painting of his young fellow artist, but it is probable that his accounts awakened in Velázquez an ardent desire to visit Italy. On landing at Genoa, in 1629, he went straight to Venice, being most anxious to see the works of the great masters of this school. He next went to Rome, and the aspect of the city and its suburbs made more of an impression on him than the masterpieces of the past. The hospitality he received at the Villa Medici, at the request of the Spanish Ambassador, naturally pleased him, and the magnificent horizon, with Rome and the Campagna to be seen from the gardens of the palace, impressed him significantly.

The two studies from nature remind us of the two months he stayed at the Villa Medici. The subjects of these pictures are most simple. One represents an avenue of the Bosco, with a portico and three arcades, through which one sees houses half hidden under a bluish-green shade. In the middle of the central arcade, there is an antique statue of Ariadne lying on a couch. The nearby trees throw their transparent shadows on the ground and on the walls of the portico. The artist has expressed, with a charmingly light touch, the play of these moving shadows which seem to tremble as we look at them. The other subject, although simpler still, is a happier choice. Above a building, ornamented with pillars and surmounted by a terrace, some old cypress trees lift their dark, olive-green foliage towards the sky. Some disjointed planks are placed over the doorway of a kind of shed built into the wall, and, in the centre of the picture, a woman is spreading out some clothes to dry over the balustrade. With this simple subject Velázquez has painted a little masterpiece. The shaded whites of the wall, enlivened sparingly here and there by the pink of the bricks, the two bluish columns and the greys of the planks and of the ground, contrast boldly with the velvety darkness of the cypresses and constitute an exquisite harmony. This small canvas is scarcely covered and in places the ground can be seen, but such as it is it suffices for showing how little

Francisco de Zurbarán,
Saint Francis in Meditation, 1639.
Oil on canvas, 162 x 137 cm.
The National Gallery, London.





a great artist needs in order to reveal to us the poetry contained in the simplest subjects. After staying a short time in Naples, he set out for Madrid in 1631, to place himself once more at the service of the King. Philip IV was greatly addicted to hunting, and this sport took up a large deal of his time. His stables and hounds were said to be the finest in Europe. In order to give full play to his inclinations in this respect, he had the little castle known as *Torre de la Parada* prepared for him. It is situated in a district where there is plenty of game, and all the pictures and tapestries of this dwelling represent hunting scenes. Among the various methods of hunting then in vogue in Spain, that known as the *Tela* was the one preferred.

On a chosen piece of ground a huge space was enclosed with canvas, held in place at intervals by stakes, and into this the game were driven, entering the enclosure by an aperture left for them. When sufficient victims were secured, the aperture was closed and they were then driven to a second enclosure nearer the centre, with several thicknesses of canvas reaching higher up than the first. The imprisoned animals were then attacked and killed by the King and his guests. Velázquez was requested to depict some of the hunting episodes, and he set to work to do this with the scrupulous exactness of a true historian. *Philip IV Hunting Wild Boar (La Tela Real)* in the National Gallery gives us a faithful picture of the kind of hunting we have just described, and, at the same time, an idea of the manners and customs, the costumes, and the most characteristic types of all classes of Spanish people of that period.

The original picture is a large one composed with admirable taste and skill, and landscape plays a considerable part in it. The enclosure has been made in the midst of somewhat austere surroundings: an uncultivated plain, with undulations ending in a steep hill, with dark bushes, shrubs, and a few stunted oak trees growing on it. In patches here and there the short, scanty grass relieves the vivid whiteness of the sand. Above the enclosures, where several boars are being pursued or attacked by the riders, there is a narrow strip of dark blue sky with grey clouds relieved by a few light touches. The strong tones of this somewhat heavy sky and this gloomy landscape set off the brilliance of the various colours introduced by the huntsmen, the courtiers and the spectators all crowding together, and yet arranged by the artist with a view of the general effect.

In the celebrated picture of *The Surrender of Breda*, better known as *Las Lanzas*, the landscape is less important, but just as necessary to the picture. Its lines and colour harmonise so well with the chief episode that one might at first think it was a background specially composed to set off the subject. But this was not so. When Velázquez did not know the district in which an event took place he spared no pains in order to obtain the information he required.



Diego Velázquez,
The Surrender of Breda or Las Lanzas, 1635.
Oil on canvas, 307 x 367 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.
(p. 126)

Francisco de Zurbarán,
The Defence of Cadiz against the English, 1634.
Oil on canvas, 302 x 323 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

Diego Velázquez,
View of the Garden of the Villa Medici in Rome, c.1630.
Oil on canvas, 48.5 x 43 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.
(p. 128)

Diego Velázquez,
View of the Garden of the Villa Medici in Rome, c.1630.
Oil on canvas, 44 x 38 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.
(p. 129)









He reproduced the topography of Breda and of the surrounding country with diligent attention to detail and accuracy. We have only to point out the strength and delicacy with which the accentuated forms of the figures and their colour schemes stand out against the soft blues and greys of the sky, and against the white and rosy vapours floating in the atmosphere and the dull-greens and yellows of the ground. Velázquez goes straight to nature for his setting. Whilst remaining absolutely truthful, he has given to this great painting the character and the significance of a historical document.

Commissions of this kind allowed the artist to show all the resources of his imagination and genius, but unfortunately he had this opportunity only too infrequently. A little later he was appointed Marshall of the Palace; many and onerous were the obligations

required of this position. Velázquez was very irregularly paid and was, nevertheless, frequently compelled to advance money on his own to defray the King's expenses.

As an artist he ought, at any rate, to have had the privilege of choosing his models, but the brilliant colourist was obliged to paint, over and over again, the expressionless features of his sovereign. With what joy Velázquez must have returned to nature when he had a little spare time! The duties of his office prevented him from going far away, hence he was obliged to content himself with subjects near the royal residence. In the artificial scenery of this landscape he must have felt something of the Court restraint. Instead of the wildness of the natural country, there were clipped trees arranged ruthlessly in line, regular, symmetrical groves, flowerbeds cut up into compartments, water either imprisoned in marble basins, spurting out from fountains or as waterfalls among the statues of mythological figures.

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes,
Dancing by the River Manzanares (detail), 1776-1777.
Oil on canvas, 272 x 295 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

Diego Velázquez,
Diego Velázquez,
Philip IV hunting Wild Boar (La Tela Real), c.1632-1637.
Oil on canvas, 182 x 302 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

We find Velázquez, once more, with his usual brilliancy and his delicate, but at the same time wholesome, sense of nature in the large picture of *St. Anthony Abbot and St. Paul the Hermit* painted for St. Anthony's Chapel at Buen Retiro. The subject he chose for this was St. Anthony's visit to St. Paul in the desert, where a raven had been in the habit of bringing him his daily food for sixty years. It now



has in its beak a double portion for the two hermits. After the manner of the early masters, Velázquez gives two other features taken from the legend of St. Paul in the same picture. Two lions are to be seen hollowing out a hole which is to be his grave with their paws, while the demon, too, as a satyr, is approaching the holy man in order to tempt him. Although the figures attract attention, they are of such small dimensions that they leave all its importance and significance to the landscape. It would be difficult to imagine wilder and finer scenery than the abrupt gorge, the subject of which was probably suggested to the artist by a sierra in the neighbourhood of Madrid. A tall elm tree, its smooth trunk covered with ivy, is to be seen in the foreground and at its foot are brambles and briars, violets and tufts of plantain. A stream of limpid water winds its way through the narrow valley, enlivening the wild country, and the blending of all the graces and severities of nature thoroughly accords with the character of the subject. With all these picturesque details, so harmoniously grouped, the artist has produced a most expressive composition.

After such flights to nature, Velázquez was obliged to return once more to the subjects which his official position imposed upon him. Notwithstanding the difficulties of his mission, the great artist fulfilled

it to the end, and was admired by everyone "for his elegance, his dignity, his exquisite taste, and the tact he displayed in everything." After a journey to the Pyrenees, he returned to Madrid on June 26th, 1660. He took back with him the germs of a malignant fever and, in spite of all the care lavished on him, he died on the 6th of August at the age of sixty-two.

Velázquez is unique as a painter. Neither his predecessors nor those who have come after him have equalled him. His own pupils have merely shown by their work the superiority of their master.

For pure and simple landscape painting there is scarcely an artist to mention in Spain as a contemporary of Velázquez except

Francisco Collantes,
The Burning Bush, c.1634.
Oil on canvas, 116 x 163 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Diego Velázquez,
Saint Anthony the Abbot and Saint Paul the Hermit, c.1634.
Oil on canvas, 257 x 188 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.



Landscape Painting





Francisco Collantes (1599-1656). His subjects are dramatic with ruined buildings and the dead coming out of their tombs to appear at the Last Judgment. *The Burning Bush* is certainly one of his best works, and here the rough wildness of the region where the scene takes place, the thick growth of shrubs and trees, the cool, clear water running among the rocks are all expressed with unusual force. The figure of Moses is that of a Spanish herdsman with an energetic face. He is surrounded by his animals. The picture shows the various aptitudes of a painter thoroughly well versed in all the resources of his art.

Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682), at the beginning of his career, always chose the most familiar and popular subjects for his pictures. With such realistic instincts, it seems as though landscape ought to have played a great part in his work. On the contrary, there is very little of it in his pictures, and when introduced its place is limited to what is strictly necessary. In the

Asensio Juliá (formerly attributed to Francisco de Goya y Lucientes),
The Colossus, 1818-1825.
Oil on canvas, 116 x 105 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes,
Two Strangers, 1820-1823.
Mixed technique, 125 x 261 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

St. Francis de Paula, in the Prado, we see just a little distance, a strip of arid land and then a few plants with large leaves, copied from nature, for filling up the foreground. In the five canvases of *The Life of Jacob*, intended for the Marquis of Villamanrique's palace, there is rather more landscape. The Hermitage has two of these pictures, created in a thoroughly decorative style. In one of them, entitled *Isaac Blessing Jacob*, the scene takes place in the patriarch's house, a delapidated cottage, such as was frequently seen in Spain. In the principal composition of this series, *Laban Searching for his Stolen Gods*, the figures and the cattle standing out against a dusty valley are vague in line, somewhat chalky, feeble in colour and lacking in body. This picture is now at The Cleveland Museum of Art.

There are very few other Spanish landscapists. Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828) was a somewhat original and brilliant artist. The backgrounds of his pictures are usually taken from the scenery on the banks of the Manzanares and from the neighbourhood of Madrid. We get them in several of his *Village Fêtes*, particularly in the *Dance on the Banks of Manzanares*, *The Meadow of San Isidro*, *Pilgrimage to San Isidro*, as well as in his dark and fantastic landscape painting *The Colossus*³ or in his mountainous landscape painting *The Cudgels*. Finally, it just remains to mention his astonishing round fresco of the *Miracle of St. Anthony of Padua* in San Antonio, Florida.

French School

During the Middle Ages, France, owing to her architects and sculptors, was at the head of the artistic movement. Nature played an important part in the decoration of French cathedrals, and this decoration was inspired in a great measure by the flora of the districts in which they were built. Painting, rudimentary though it was at first, gradually developed.

The brilliant and fleeting splendour of French painting was due to the influence of the miniaturists.

The French artists could not fail to be influenced by the pronounced and affected style of the Fontainebleau Italians, and by the somewhat earthy naturalism of the Flemish painters. As in Flanders and in Holland, emigration began to appeal to French artists, causing men of mark to yield to the temptation of crossing the Alps. The history of French painting really begins with Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665). Although the longest and best part of his career was spent in Rome, the great artist himself was thoroughly French, born in Normandy.

The beauty of the country in which he spent his youth may account for the precocious revelation of his tastes. The hamlet of Villers is situated in a narrow valley, surrounded by hills and shaded by the ancient trees of a forest. The Seine, flowing at the foot of the white cliffs, winds round to the west of Le Petit-Andely, whilst to the south, its course is dominated by the imposing ruins of the Chateau Gaillard, proudly set on the top of the steep rocks. The whole of this part of Normandy offers picturesque and varied scenery, and has more than once inspired landscapists of various times.

Before the end of the year 1612, Poussin decided to run away from home and escaped to Paris. Poussin then had a very hard time, as during the next few years he underwent painful privations and was obliged to accept all kinds of work, even the most thankless. Nothing, however, caused his courage to give way, and even in his greatest distress he lost no opportunity of obtaining instruction.

Poussin wished to escape his difficulties by his own efforts and earn his living by his work. It would be interesting to see some of the pictures he painted at this period with a "furia di diavolo" (fury of the devil), which enabled him to produce six large works within eight days. On his return from a journey to Poitou, he had to walk back to Paris in greater poverty than ever. Unfortunately none of the pictures from this time have been preserved. Finally, worn out with fatigue, the unfortunate young man contracted an illness, the effects of which he felt for the remainder of his life. It was with great difficulty that he managed to get back to Villers where he stayed for one year.

The isolation and inaction of the year spent at Villers only increased his desire to obtain the means for that study which he had hitherto lacked. It was in vain that his parents, in order to dissuade him from his purpose, reminded him of his recent experiences. However, nothing could make him give way, and he once more left home in order to seek his fortune, leaving Paris for Rome in 1624.

His trials were by no means over. At this time Poussin was thirty years of age, but he at once returned to the study of art. In order to give himself up to independent study, he was once more obliged to accept all kinds of tasks and to be contented with very small remuneration. He could at any rate improve his own work, for he found in Rome those facilities for which he had always longed. His spare time was taken up with studying the masterpieces, the buildings, the ruins, and nature. He frequented Domenichino's studio, where he was able to study the living model, anatomy, and perspective. He was passionately fond of the antique. Domenichino and Carracci attracted him in turn, but he soon preferred Titian to either of them, due to the poetry and strength which he found in this artist's interpretation of life and nature.

Poussin's appreciation of Titian is evident in the setting of the first work he painted at Rome. He had not studied sufficiently himself, so that it was from Titian that he borrowed his backgrounds, the high values and the strong yet delicate contrasts, which he introduced between the soft distant blues and the golden shades of his skies and vegetation. It is surprising that, after the power and the happy contrasts of colour which distinguish the works of this period, softened tones and, at times, even somewhat dull shades have marked his second stage.

Poussin's fame gradually increased in Rome and, after his dire poverty, he appreciated the tranquil, though at the same time laborious, life which his improved position enabled him to lead. But his health was undermined by the long years of poverty and privations he had endured. Soon after his arrival in Italy he had an illness, through which he was nursed by a very wealthy French family living there named Dughet. Poussin, grateful for their kindness and determined never to leave Rome, married their eldest daughter, Anna Maria Dughet, in 1629. His two brothers-in-law were very soon his pupils. Guided by Poussin, Jean Dughet devoted himself to engraving and interpreted the works of his master. Gaspard Dughet soon acquired celebrity as a landscapist and did honour to the

Nicolas Poussin,
Parnassus, 1630-1631.
Oil on canvas, 145 x 197 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.





name of Poussin, which he added to his own Christian name of Gaspard, and by which he is more generally known.

The Roman Campagna appealed to Poussin and harmonized with his tastes, so that he grew increasingly attached to it. The city itself had that sovereign charm in which so many artists have since revelled, and which Poussin was the first to feel and to reveal. He had, as it were, a complete repertoire there of all the picturesque elements which make the life and poetry of nature. Gradually, therefore, in his pictures, landscape began to take a more important place. Great as he was as a historical painter, it is this other side of Poussin's work and talent which concerns us here.

There was a tendency to consult nature more thoroughly, and to study it more closely than before. In order to take note of effects, of form and colouring, Poussin, when out walking, would always carry a pocketbook with him for observations. The number of sketches he

made in this way is considerable. Summary though they were, they contained the essential information which Poussin took on the spot and considered sufficient. He supplied all the rest, when in his studio, from his observant mind, which at an early age was always alert and which, as time went on, became more receptive. If he had carried these studies further they might have interfered with him in his composition, and for this reason he preferred to keep entirely free. Careful as he usually was about everything concerning the technique of his art, he did not take into account the fact that the reddish preparation of the canvases he used would turn dark and destroy all the freshness of the colour. In using these canvases the artist was no doubt tempted by the advantage offered by their middle tone, on which the lights and values showed up quickly, so that a summary idea of the general effect could easily be obtained. A large number of his paintings have suffered through this faulty practice, so that today the excellent engravings executed in Poussin's lifetime give us a better idea of their original state.

His daily walks were not chosen in a haphazard way. He would go into the country to study the various details he intended to put into the work he was engaged on. Although he borrowed from nature in this way, it was rare that he copied exactly enough for one

Nicolas Poussin,
Spring or The Earthly Paradise, 1660-1664.
Oil on canvas, 118 x 160 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



to identify the localities which furnished him with his ideas. It is only occasionally that we find in his compositions the exact spot which inspired him. But, as a rule, the Roman scenery in his pictures is slightly modified and changed, according to his requirements.

Without respecting local colour, he adapts his landscapes to the spirit of the episodes he treats. These may be Grecian or Roman, they may have for their setting Egypt or Galilee, or even imaginary countries. He then places in his landscapes mythological divinities or the Apostles, as the case may be. For him it is enough that the scenery should be magnificent, gay, or forbidding, according to the requirements of his subject. It must be in harmony with that, in order to emphasise its character. And yet it is the Roman Campagna that he has painted most. It appears in his works not as an abstraction, but most vividly and in its most significant features. Poussin may have visited other parts of Italy, but he remained impervious against the fascination of any other scenery. He always sought and found his subjects in the environs of Rome, and he is par excellence the painter of the Roman Campagna.

At the beginning of 1639, the first overtures were made to Poussin. A royal letter, dated from Fontainebleau, January 18th, 1639,

begged him to return to France. Besides the various advantages promised him, the letter was a mark of esteem which he thoroughly appreciated. But with the idea of giving up his tranquillity and his regular work for all the harassment of Court life, he could not make up his mind over the sacrifice. The more he argued the more his arrival was insisted upon. It was pointed out to him that this delay was disrespectful and almost insulting, and finally he was almost threatened, as the king's strong influence was mentioned.

Finally, he was obliged to yield, and, in 1641, he arrived safe and sound at Fontainebleau, where he was welcomed with cordiality. In Paris, too, he was feted and taken on the very day of his arrival to the "Little Palace," where he was to live. Cardinal Richelieu embraced him and assured him that "it was a great pleasure to see him." Three days later he met the King at St. Germain; "his Majesty most kindly and politely deigned to say the

Nicolas Poussin,
Summer or Ruth and Boaz, 1660-1664.
Oil on canvas, 118 x 160 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



pleasantest things to him, and to talk to him for half an hour, asking him all kinds of questions." The King then thought of an annoyance that another artist would feel on being supplanted by the new arrival, and, turning to his courtiers, he exclaimed, "[Simon] Vouet will be in a fine state!"

When Poussin was back in Paris two thousand golden crowns were brought to him, and after that came orders for designs for tapestry and an important decoration for the Grand Gallery of the Louvre.

After all the excitement of the homage paid to him at first, he began to feel like a foreigner in a strange land. He felt himself too much in the foreground, surrounded by jealousy and petty intrigues, while his arrival had disturbed many people and wounded the feelings of some of his fellow artists. Vouet was not the only one who owed him a grudge for coming to Paris; there were others

who could not forgive Poussin for the favour he had won. Poussin did not feel equal to contests and competition of this kind. A terrible homesickness took possession of him. Finally, when he could endure things no longer, feeling sure that all requests to go home would be opposed, he made an excuse of his and of various private matters that needed his presence for leaving Paris. Promising to return, he went back to Rome in 1642.

Once at home again, he settled there for the rest of his life. Almost as soon as he returned, orders began to come in, and, without haste, he gave himself up methodically to work which he had only accepted because it was in accordance with his taste.

Although Poussin continued to paint subjects taken from fable or from history, as well as religious themes, he was more and more tempted by landscape painting. Deprived of his beloved Roman Campagna for two years, he was delighted to get back to his walks in Rome.

The complete harmony of its various picturesque elements appeared to Poussin to be the chief most desirable element in a painting. It was by this that he endeavoured to give unity and

Nicolas Poussin,
Autumn or The Spies with the Grapes of the Promised Land, 1660-1664.
Oil on canvas, 117 x 160 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



strength to the impression. Composition, therefore, always received his special attention. It is in this branch of his art that he particularly excelled and in which he showed himself supreme. If the whole were well thought out, firmly established and harmonious in its proportions, the details would find their natural place in it. These details are so completely a part of the composition that it would be impossible to take them away from it, or to put others in their place. They are numerous, but they are subordinate to each other according to the degree of their importance or significance. It requires a certain amount of effort to realise their value, so much do they lend themselves to the general impression.

The explanation given by Étienne Baudet, beneath the engraving of *Landscape of Polyphemus*, is proof, given in simple words, of the happy arrangement all the details so skilfully brought together in this beautiful composition. This picture shows us the place where Polyphemus lived in Sicily. The cool water, the shade of the trees, the view of the meadows and the arable land, closed in by mountains, rocks and sea give the idea of a pleasant but somewhat wild country. In the foreground are three young nymphs, half naked and wearing wreaths made of reeds, whom two satyrs are about to surprise. There is a river to be seen on the

other side, and a little way off peasants are ploughing and digging the ground and a shepherd is tending his flock. Polyphemus, seated on a high mountain, the top of which he completely covers, is looking out towards the sea. He believes that he will be able by his singing and by the sound of his rustic reeds, to charm the fair Galatea with whom, according to the poets, he is in love.

In order to more clearly determine the position which his figures should occupy and to study the effect of light upon them, as he was clever in handling clay, Poussin used to make models which he could place in the sunshine, in order to take exact note of their respective positions and of their chiaroscuro. There was perhaps some danger for him in this system as, with his fixed ideas on the subject of what constitutes the proper domain of painting and of sculpture, he was a little too apt to confuse the limits of these two arts. Jonas Burgert had some reason, therefore, for saying that

Nicolas Poussin,
Winter or The Flood, 1660-1664.
Oil on canvas, 118 x 160 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



"no painter was so much of a sculptor as Poussin." His landscapes, however, made up for all that was too sculptural about his figures, and Jean Pierre Mariette, in his criticism of Poussin says,

In landscape he had quite a different method from that which he observed in his figure subjects. The indispensable need he felt of going to the spots themselves, to study certain subjects, made him sketch a great number of landscapes from nature with infinite care, catching with great attention any remarkable effects of light which he afterwards used with great success in his pictures.

The strength and wealth of his conceptions constitute the special originality of Poussin, and prove the value to a master of excellence in one branch of art when he has a sufficient knowledge of other branches. His execution, without being remarkable, is always good, even, and exact, enabling him to represent things clearly. In its strength and correctness it never aims at virtuosity. His colour has no striking brilliancy. In painting, he avoided those extreme effects of light and shade which are to be found in most of his drawings. He would not have liked to attract attention by any bravado. "The drawing," he used to say, "must give way to the idea: no effort must be seen, no seeking for effect, and before everything else it must be in harmony with the nature of the subject."

Other men may have been greater painters or their drawing may have been more striking; they may have put more movement into their figures, more elegance and grace into their models. But no artist has ever expressed with more taste, order, and clearness, the beauty of general effect, the grouping of attitudes and the eloquence of expression. He tells us the qualities he regards as the most necessary for an artist, and it seems as though Poussin is describing his own ideal when he lays stress on those he considers most desirable. "There must first be arrangement," he says, "then ornament, grace, animation, truth, and judgment everywhere. The last two qualities," he adds, "belong to the painter and cannot be taught. They are like Virgil's golden bough which no man can find or gather unless guided by Fate."

With his lofty ideas of art, he gradually became entirely absorbed in it. His whole life, exemplary in its perfect unity, and so well planned, was a work of art in itself, and the nobility of his loyal nature commands all respect. He cared no more for honours than he did for money, and there was nothing he liked so much as the simplicity of the life he had chosen to lead. He could devote himself entirely to whatever he was doing. He set himself a daily task which he always methodically finished.



Nicolas Poussin,
Landscape with Diogenes Breaking his Drinking Bowl, 1648.
Oil on canvas, 160 x 221 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.
(p. 142)

Nicolas Poussin,
Orpheus and Eurydice, 1650-1653.
Oil on canvas, 124 x 200 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Poussin's portrait in the Louvre shows the man just as he was. We see him there with his sturdy build, his manly face, his frank, straightforward look and all-seeing gaze, his placid modest expression, and as Bellori says, "that strength and authority peculiar also to his genius. Under this tranquil exterior we feel that there was an ardent soul, but a soul that had learned self-government."

When he grew old, the artist's energy and fertility remained intact. He loved nature more than ever and was in close communion with it. This was just the time of his best landscapes, *Effects of Fear*, *Diogenes Throwing Away His Bowl*, and *Orpheus and Eurydice*. The last is one of his most perfect compositions. Eugène Delacroix says,

It presents in so clever and touching a manner the eternal contrasts of joy and sadness, with a divine singer attracting all the nymphs and shepherds, who are amazed at the charm of his lyre, whilst Eurydice in the foreground, seized with a mortal chill through the serpent's sting, lets the flowers fall from her basket.

As usual the Roman Campagna supplied the setting for the Virgilian episode. The Peneus is the Tiber. Poussin, like Titian, paints thick wreaths of smoke rising in the atmosphere from the tower, which is in reality the Castle of S. Angelo. On the horizon, the outline of Mount Soratte is partially covered with snow.

"By living as he did with the people of antiquity," says Sir Joshua Reynolds, "Poussin got into the habit of thinking as they did." Arcadia, as he presents it in one of his most celebrated compositions, is more that of the poets than that of the shepherds. With its fine proportions, its majestic and somewhat severe scenery, it seems more suitable for learned men and heroes. It might very well be the discreet confidant of their ideas, the inspirer of their deeds. In all the representations hitherto provided, there is not one that answers better to the preconceived idea of this subject than Poussin's picture.

Although he had left France at an early age and lived far away from his native country, he was very French at heart, and he belonged to his age. The "judgment everywhere," which he considered necessary for the painter, is very much the same thing as that "common sense" which Peter Von Corneille, with his proud modesty, declared to be "his only rule." The authority he enjoyed was so great that Jean-Baptiste Colbert and Louis XIV consulted him on most of the questions concerning the development of art in France. After a momentary eclipse during the eighteenth century, which, with its elegant and somewhat frivolous refinements, was scarcely able to appreciate Poussin, his place in the first rank of the French school was restored to him by common consent. Delacroix

considers him as one of the boldest pioneers in the history of art; something akin to a revolutionist. For very different motives, painters extremely unlike each other, Camille Corot, Jean-François Millet, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, and many others who wished to put some special meaning into their pictures of nature, all lived with his works and benefited by them. The foundations of his art were substantial and with him nature was at the root of everything.

Poussin had perfect confidence in the path he had marked out for himself at an early age. It was to his work that he owed the only consolations possible to him in his old age, saddened as that was with private trouble. As long as he could, the courageous artist continued his work, but his hand almost refused the service demanded of it; in the somewhat incoherent strokes in his sketches of this period the trembling fingers betray themselves. His touch became heavier and more hesitant, whilst his mind retained all its vigour and his creations all their charm. He still hoped to be able to surpass himself in the execution of a picture for which he had received a commission from M. de Chantelou. "People say," he wrote to him on the 24th of December, 1657, "that the swan sings his sweetest song when he is near death. I will try to follow its example and do better work than ever; this may be the last service I shall ever render you." It was just at this time that, as though in consideration of his well-spent life, he was able to paint that series of the *Four Seasons* which can now be seen at the Louvre. In these pictures, the diversity of subject and the boldness of impression bear witness to his powerful genius and the ease with which he worked.

His last unfinished picture, *Apollo and Daphne*, is certainly one of his most poetical compositions. Under a blue sky are thickets of trees, between which are wooded slopes, streamlets, and cattle quenching their thirst on a warm day. In this nest of greenery and coolness, among all the woodland divinities resting is Apollo holding his lyre. Daphne is there too, lying in a graceful position under the branches of a young oak tree. The whole scene, with its lovingly grouped figures, seems more like the work of an artist in full maturity than that of an old man. Soon afterwards, however, his health became worse until finally he could no longer paint. He apparently met death in a tranquil spirit. After six weeks of suffering and a lingering death, he died in 1665, leaving, both in his art and life, the example of the rarest and perfect blending of all the qualities of a painter, and all the virtues of an upright man.

Nicolas Poussin,
The Arcadian Shepards or "Et in Arcadia Ego", c.1638-1640.
Oil on canvas, 85 x 121 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.





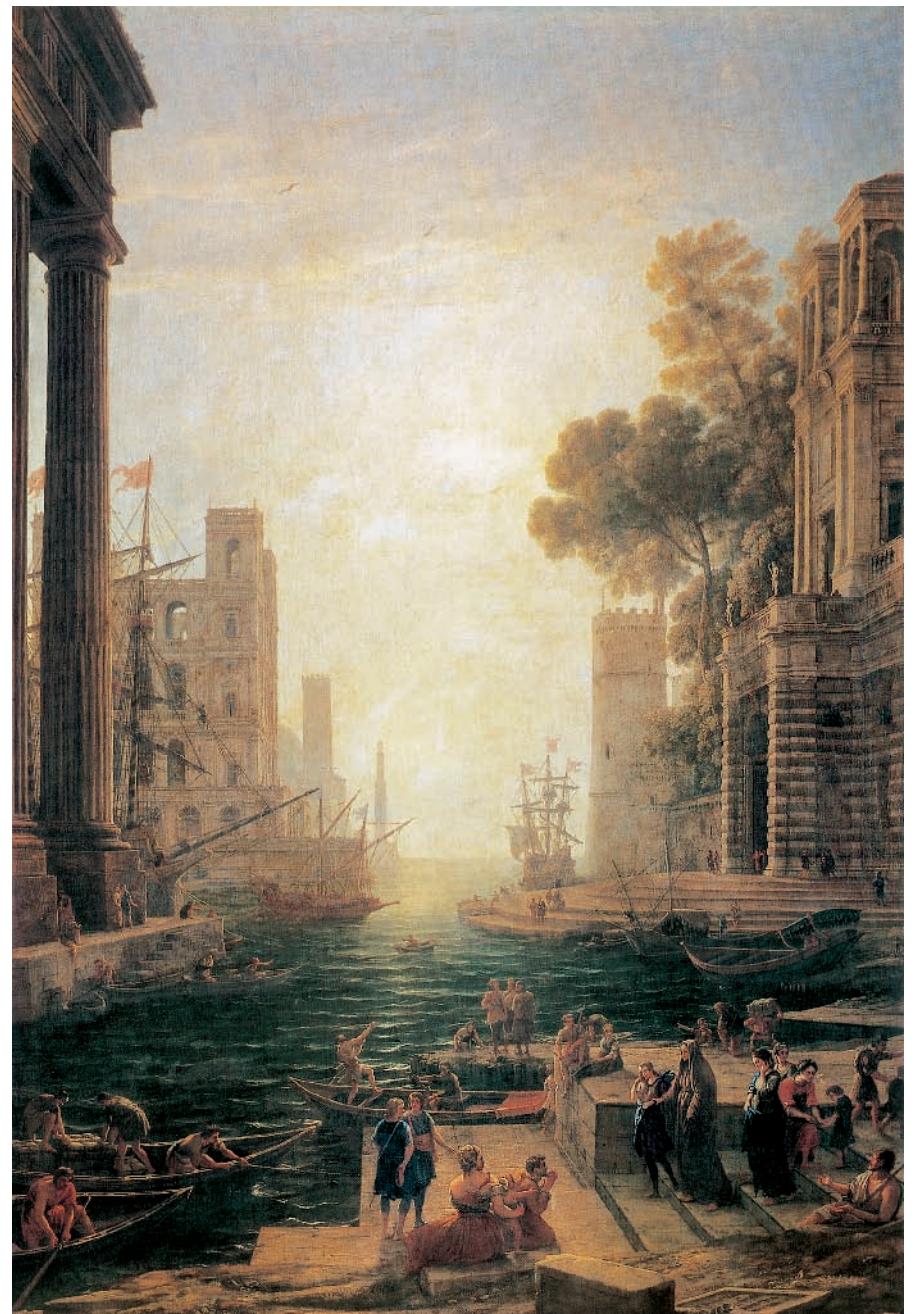
The poverty and insignificance of conventional works became more apparent in his followers and imitators. They were, however, quite in accordance with the usual way of considering and treating nature in France at that time. In French literature we have abundant and conclusive proof of this. Except in works by Jean de La Fontaine, the sentiment of nature seems to have been almost entirely absent with the writers of the "great century," faithful interpreters though they were of the ideas of polished French society. We see the taste of the times in the gardens, with their shady nooks, their labyrinths, their clipped hedges, their yew trees cut in the form of vases or ornaments of all kinds.

When Pierre-Olivier Malherbe speaks of the way in which Henry IV beautified the royal residences, he praises the king more particularly for having "made nature give way to the miracles of art." In an old description of the Fontainebleau Forest, the spots which are the most praised are The Chief Huntsman's Table, which one reaches "after passing along avenues planted with fan-shaped trees." Then there were the Crossroads of the Star, "entirely covered with a hedge which a special gardener was commissioned to keep in order." Louis XIV was attracted to Fontainebleau by his love of hunting. He took in his train the beautiful Court ladies who cared little about the beauties of the forest, and he tried to enliven them by sending "his little violinists" to accompany them when out walking.

'Le Lorrain', Claude Gellée

Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), another Frenchman who was almost the same age as Poussin and who, like Poussin, was established in Rome, devoted himself almost exclusively to landscape painting, and deserves to be mentioned among the pioneers. He too exercised a great influence, though in a totally different direction. The name of Lorrain, which he had adopted and to which he did all honour, Claude Gellée owed to his native province. He was born in the little village of Champagne, on the Moselle. His parents were people in humble circumstances and the little inclination shown by Claude for study was certainly not calculated to make his friends foresee the glorious destiny awaiting him.

Claude's parents could not afford to continue the education of a boy with no inclination for study. He was therefore apprenticed to a confectioner and, at the age of twelve, on the death of his parents, was handed over to his elder brother, Jean Gellée, an engraver who lived at Freiburg. The instruction Claude obtained from his brother was very elementary. He merely sketched foliage and arabesques, destined probably for embroidery designs.



Claude Lorrain (Claude Gellée),
Port Scene with the Villa Medici, 1637.
Oil on canvas, 102 x 133 cm.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.
(p. 146)

Claude Lorrain (Claude Gellée),
Embarkation of Saint Paula Romana at Ostia, 1639.
Oil on canvas, 211 x 145 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.



It is certain that one of his relatives passing through Freiburg on his way to Rome offered to take the boy with him in order that he might continue his artistic education there. Besides the masterpieces of antiquity and of the Renaissance there was, just then, a special attraction for a young artist as fond of nature as was Claude. Landscape painting was being cultivated as a special branch of study, and had already found several exponents. Unfortunately, the slender resources at the young man's command were soon exhausted and his relative, with whom he had travelled to Rome, did not stay with him long. Claude was obliged to leave Rome and for two years he studied in Naples under a second-rate landscapist. In the year 1619, we find him back in Rome,

employed by Cardinal Montalto in some decorative work confided to the painter Agostino Tassi. The honour of having been Claude's teacher is now all that preserves the name of Goffredo Wals from oblivion. In order to have lessons from him, Claude was obliged to accept the humblest position.

Owing to his usefulness and to the talent he developed, the young domestic gradually rose to the rank of collaborator. His master made use of him when decorating the palace in which the brothers Paul and Mattheus Bril had left some of their important works. The sight and study of these pictures must have been profitable to Claude. In 1621, Tassi, through the death of Paul V, lost his protector and found himself in a difficult situation. Once more in dire poverty, Claude decided to return to his own country, where he hoped to be able to find some more honourable and profitable employment for his talent. The Court of Lorraine at that time enjoyed a certain reputation for luxury and taste, which its Dukes

Claude Lorrain (Claude Gellée),
View of the Campo Vaccino, 1636.
Canvas, 56 x 72 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



took a pride in maintaining. Imitating their neighbours of Burgundy, they inaugurated that tradition for elegance and love of art which was kept up in Nancy until the days of Stanislaus. They endeavoured to attract celebrated artists to their Court and encouraged those born in their states.

Claude knew that art was held in high esteem at the Court of Lorraine, and there was some likelihood of being able to make a position for himself there. In 1625, he therefore decided to leave Rome. He was at once employed in the decoration of the Carmelite Chapel of Nancy, where he was to first paint in the figures and then the architectural ornamentation. This kind of work was not at all to his taste. The fascination of the Italian scenery took possession of him; he thought of the liberty which artists enjoyed there. In 1627, he once more decided to leave his own country and this time it was to return no more. All that he had learned from his various masters was comparatively little; he had been more fortunate in what he had obtained directly from nature.

Those studies of his, which while ripening his talent, were destined to ensure for him a less difficult existence and well deserved fame in the future. Claude now wished to extend the field of his study and to vary the subjects of his landscapes. Together with Tivoli, his favourite places were Ariccia, Frascati and Subiaco. Taking the risk of malaria, he would also continue his wanderings across the Pontine Marshes, along that enchanting coast which is still more picturesque on account of the numerous streams of water from the neighbouring mountains. He no doubt went again to the Bay of Naples, where he hoped to accumulate richer booty.

Claude Lorrain (Claude Gellée),
Seascape with Crying Heliades, c.1640.
 Oil on canvas, 125.5 x 175.5 cm.
 Wallraf-Richartz Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne.



Claude Lorrain (Claude Gellée),

Landscape with Apollo and the Cumæan Sibyl, c.1645-1649.

Oil on canvas, 99.5 x 127 cm.

The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

Claude Lorrain (Claude Gellée),

Morning in the Harbour, late 1630s.

Oil on canvas, 97.5 x 120.5 cm.

The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

The various places in which Claude made his studies can be traced throughout his sketches. Some of these sketches, like those of Poussin, are done hurriedly in a few strokes. Others are more carefully executed, more exact, and with more charm; but all of them are free and spirited. At the beginning of his career there was a certain heaviness in the foreground of his pictures, the foliage of his trees was perhaps too massive and there was a stiffness and monotony about the trunks and branches. As time went on, he corrected these faults and his foregrounds were treated as perfectly as his distances. He learnt to make use of all the materials he had collected, not for servile imitations, which he always disliked, but for pictures in which they could be utilised for the realisation of his ideas. We very rarely find in his pictures any special or exact representation of a given place.

With Claude's pictures, as with Poussin's, an attentive examination is necessary in order to discover the studies used. Such studies had been for the furtherance of his artistic education. The first of Claude's dated works that we know are his engravings. His skill with the pen was a natural preparation for engraving. He had perhaps learnt the elementary principles from his first master Wals, who was also an engraver. All his engravings are, in quality, very unequal. Regardless of technical difficulties, Claude endeavoured to express his idea as clearly as possible. With his engravings, just as with his pen or his paintbrush, he did not attempt to make a display of his knowledge and in consequence his work gains a certain individual note of elegance and of lightness. His other work must have been improved by the fact that in this art he was obliged to emphasise more distinctly the salient points of his compositions. In a few strokes he was able to indicate the vegetation of his landscape, the characteristics of different soils, and the movements of the clouds and even of light. Before his first engravings, dated 1630, Claude must certainly have painted a great number of pictures, but there is nothing of his dated earlier than 1639. There are two landscapes of that year in the Louvre, *The Village Festival* and *Seaport at Sunset*, both painted for Pope Urban VIII.

The seaport is one of the subjects that Claude has so frequently treated with slight modifications. The sea, bounded on the left by a continuation of palaces, and with ships and boats on the right, dies away along the coast where there are a number of figures. People are strolling about and sailors and porters are to be seen. On the horizon the calm sky is just tinged with red, and the sun, which is about to disappear, colours with its last rays the sea into which it will sink. The boats, the buildings, and even the waves themselves, in proportion to their various distances, are gradually impregnated with the warm light. But this picture has not the breadth of execution which Claude subsequently exhibits.





An unfortunate attempt at restoration has also impaired it and robbed the colour of its original freshness. It is believed that before this one Claude had painted two other small landscapes for M. de Bhune, the French Ambassador at Rome. These two pictures: *View of a Port with Setting Sun* and *Campo Vaccino* are now in the Conde Museum and Louvre, respectively.

Claude's days of apprenticeship and of early youth had certainly been hard for the poor Lorraine boy who, without influence or means, had left his native country. Owing to his

Claude Lorrain (Claude Gellée),
View of a Port with the Capitol, 1636.
Canvas, 56 x 72 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

tenacity and to his love of order and economy, his financial affairs began to improve. In 1635 Claude was already celebrated and, after his former poverty, comparatively well-to-do. It is quite certain that his success produced many imitators. The idea of exposing frauds made him keep a sketch of every picture that left his studio, in order to have a proof of authenticity to show. This is supposed to be the origin of the valuable collection of two hundred drawings, known as the *Liber Veritatis* (Book of Truth), which was published in 1777 by Boydell. These reproductions were etched by Richard Earlom, but not at all satisfactorily. Imperfect as they are, they are extremely interesting for consultation. We see from them that when he entrusted to his collaborators the work of painting any figures, he had, himself, first marked the place, the importance and the outline of the groups, and the dark or light affect that they were to give to his



pictures. By this precaution, the unity of the work was preserved, and the collaborators had only to carry out the indications of the artist. Clumsy as these figures sometimes are, they are one with the composition, and play an essential part in the general arrangement of line and effect.

As time went on Claude's fame increased. Orders came in fast and, notwithstanding his devotion to his work, he could scarcely execute them. On the list of Claude's patrons we find the King of Spain, and the English, German, and Flemish amateurs. On turning to the Book of Truth, it is evident that the subjects of the compositions executed for these different amateurs were those then in vogue. Some of them were taken from the Old or New Testament; others were inspired by mythology or history. There are others, too, which were mere episodes of pastoral life, but these are rare.

When treating such various subjects Claude, unlike Poussin, did not trouble about their meaning, or their historical setting. It was in the same palace, ancient or modern, that he placed *Cleopatra* or the *Queen of Sheba*, *Ulysses* or *St. Paul*, *Hagar* or *St. Ursula* and her companions. All that he required from his subject was a title for his picture and a theme which harmonised with the lines and effects of his landscape. Without concerning himself too much with geography or history, he endeavoured to vary as far as possible his pictorial arrangements. The diversity of his combinations is remarkable. When any arrangement satisfied him he did not

Claude Lorrain (Claude Gellée),
Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba, 1648.
 Oil on canvas, 149.1 x 196.7 cm.
 The National Gallery, London.



refrain from using it again. He not only reproduced the general outline several times, but there are certain details which play the part of general accessories. There is the Palace of the Medici, and above all the Roman temple, whose colonnade, ordinarily hidden by the frame, leaves a glimpse of rich vegetation visible which, silhouetted against the sky, contrasts well with the halftones of the buildings and with the luminous brilliancy of the atmosphere.

Claude Lorrain was a hard worker, and produced a great many pictures, but certainly he frequently repeated himself. Without studying all his works in detail, it is interesting to note their principal features. We mention here only those which, by reason of their importance or their originality, appear to stand out specially. Some of Claude's works have since been moved to the Hermitage Gallery. *Morning*, one of the most celebrated of these, is a composition of a kind somewhat rare with Claude, who usually reserved a large place for the sky and distances. In this picture magnificent vegetation occupies nearly all the canvas, so that a break can only be seen here and there. Half hidden by the huge trees, some picturesque ruins, which seem almost lost in the deserted country, complete the impression which one derives from the whole scene.

The *Landing of Cleopatra*, painted probably between 1642 and 1643, is the best of the sixteen pictures by Claude in the Louvre. The limpid sky is shaded gradually from pale blue to a dull golden yellow, and light clouds float capriciously in the air, softening the atmospheric effect. The sea, of a rich, deep, yet indescribable colour, is very natural. In the foreground it is of a bluish-green, gradually dying away to the neutral shades of the horizon, while the more distinct reflections of the sunrays are seen playing on the waves. The clear, cut-out lines of the figures and the boats; the broad, and at the same time delicate, execution – all is admirable in this beautiful canvas, which is considered to be one of Claude's masterpieces. Many of the works of this great landscapist, the most remarkable of them, indeed, are to be seen in England. *L'Embarquement de la Reine de Saba* was painted in 1648 and is more like the *Landing of Cleopatra*, the composition of which it also resembles. Rather less strong in tone, it has the same brilliancy and radiance.

The obligation of executing his numerous orders absorbed the artist's whole life. In order to vary the subjects of his landscapes as much as possible, he was obliged to have constant recourse to the studies he had previously made. He was not able to reserve as

Claude Lorrain (Claude Gellée),
Landscape with Jacob, Rachel and Leah by the Well (Morning), 1666.
 Oil on canvas, 113 x 157 cm.
 The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

much time as he formerly did for working directly from nature, and even had he wished it, he could not have worked outdoors much at this time of his life, as, from the age of forty, he suffered from gout. In these districts the tempting hours of sunrise and sunset, which he had always delighted in studying, are frequently fatal to landscapists. Although his disease increased, he continued his work courageously. This constant work was both a habit and a necessity to Claude. He found in it his consolation for the sufferings and loneliness of old age.

When everything was thus settled, he passed away in 1682 after great suffering. After Paul Bril and the importance of his work in the creation of landscape painting as a branch, Claude was destined to give to this new strand of art its complete development. In this he was certainly ahead of Poussin, for it was only late in his career that the latter devoted himself to landscape alone. With Claude, a greater prominence was given to nature. The impressions he received were evidently keenly felt, and it was this that decided his career at so early an age and that gave such a charm to his work. The path thus traced out for him, he followed unhesitatingly. The unity which we see in Claude's whole life we find in his work. Other painters were more spirited, more powerful perhaps, but without any sudden flights or surprises, without leaving anything to chance or hurrying in any way, Claude attained his object and reached his goal. He spared neither time nor trouble, so that when he parted with one of his pictures, he had put into it all of which he was capable. Instead of diminishing the value of his work, he knew that he thus added to it just what it required. The thousand little shades, the delicate blending and harmony of so many different elements, the skilful touch which the artist never endeavoured to emphasise, all this could not be obtained on the spur of the moment.

Although complex, the great artist's technique was sane and methodical. He touched up his work frequently, but he did not overload or weaken it. His painting did not suffer as Poussin's so frequently did, and those of his canvases which have been respected by restorers have kept their freshness and brilliancy intact. On his transparent semi-tints, the details were indicated by touches of paint which harmonised well with the half tones on which they were laid. Even when the darkest shadow and the highest light are brought together, the contrast is never exaggerated. He always obtained sufficient contrast with moderate values. Without detracting from his effect and without emphasising any form, or making one tone especially predominant, he gave his attention to the general unity and complete harmony of the whole. Although he did not treat figures as successfully as landscape, we know that he took the trouble to arrange exactly the place and dimensions of those he introduced into his pictures.



It must be admitted, however, that in his pictures the figures had very little meaning. Claude was entirely uneducated and all that he knew of the old fables was what he had learned from a translation of *Ovid* by Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara. He depended on this book for the mythological subjects he intended to represent. It is a mere chance when the episodes with which he enlivens his scenes are in harmony with them. In some the discord is very striking, but the artist does not appear to have attached much importance to this. It was merely to be in accordance with the taste of the times and to please his patrons that he introduced figures into his pictures. In these attempts he may have shown some clumsiness, but whenever he treated landscape alone he was always at his ease. Nature was his domain.

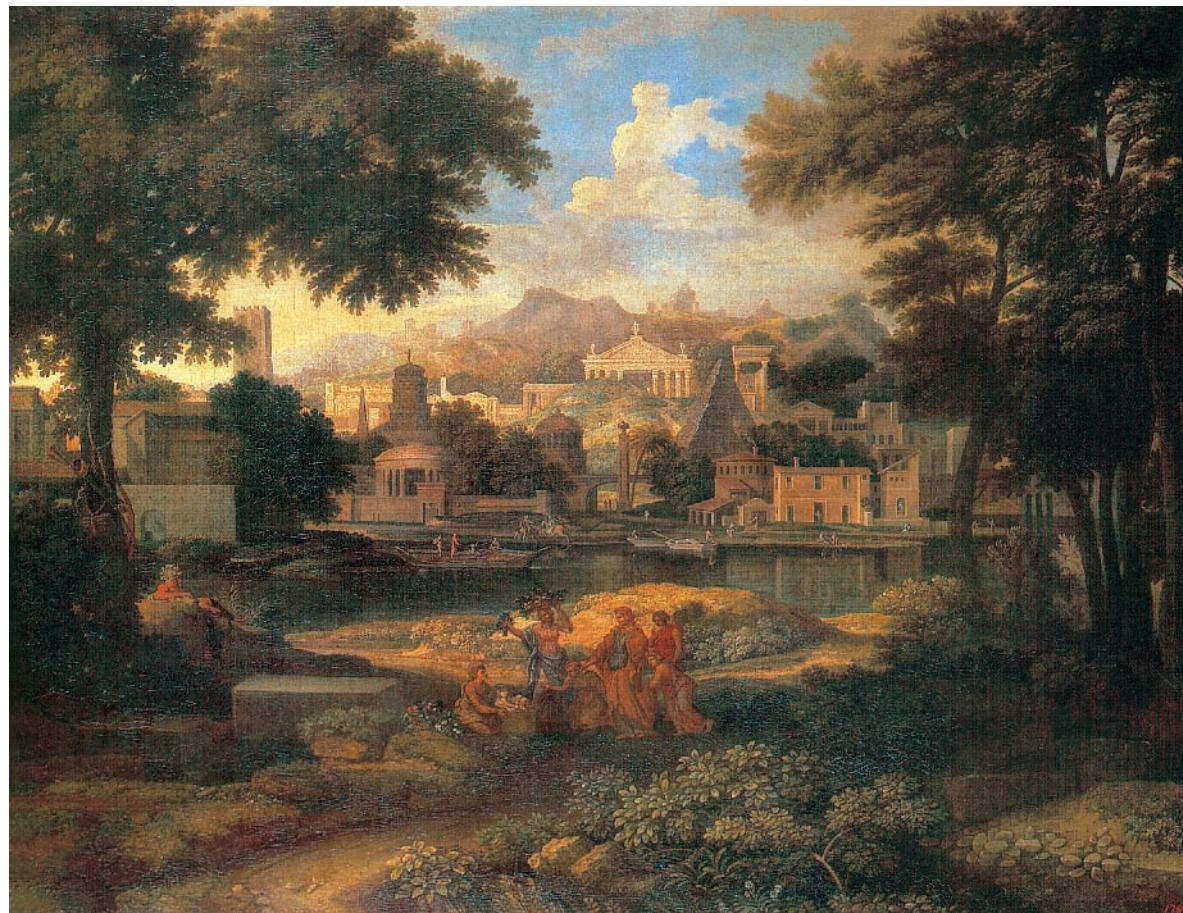
In the very varied combinations to which the great artist had recourse, the general view of the composition is always distinct. The mixture of planned regularity and of contrasts skilfully

arranged seems to be dictated by a sentiment of refinement that one would scarcely have expected to meet with in a man without a detailed education in culture. The lines are where they are needed; they either mingle with or oppose each other, they are distinct or vague, there is an abruptness or a graceful curve, but all as required. Claude's fondness for space and light explains the important place he always reserves for the sky and sea in his landscapes. These were the two things that fascinated him most in nature. When two pictures were ordered from him which were intended to be hung together, one of them was nearly always a seaport with more or less modified details. Many of these exist at present. The perfection with which the artist treated this subject, and the variety he put into it, is astonishing.

It needed the wonderful brush of Claude to animate this restricted palette with its middle tints and absence of violent contrasts, and to modulate it with so much refinement and delicacy. Rembrandt, about that time, was veiling the light and only allowing a few furtive rays to filter through the shade, but in Claude's pictures light filled all space with its brilliance.

Other landscapists have sought in nature an echo to the agitations of mankind. They have endeavoured to translate the cries of our

Claude Lorrain (Claude Gellée),
The Departure of Hagar and Ishmael, 1668.
Oil on canvas, 106.4 x 140 cm.
Alte Pinakothek, Munich.



sorrows and passions by nature's disturbances or furies. Claude offers us peace. The infinite perspectives that he discloses to us are gay and the fertile countries speak to us of happiness. Sleeping waters reflect the serenity of the sky. We never find, along the banks of his rivers, trees such as J. van Ruisdael delighted to paint: rough, knotted, clinging to the ground, twisted convulsively, and bent and mutilated by the wind. Claude's trees have never known what it is to struggle. They lift their rounded tops in an ever tranquil atmosphere and are respected and majestic. The sea never threatens in Claude's pictures. Palaces may be there at the water's edge, but the idle waves die away at the foot of their flights of steps. The tranquil splendour of dawn or the solemn gravity of sunset fills the sky and here and there a few light clouds serve as a graceful escort to the sun. Gaiety is to be seen everywhere in this benignant nature: mankind, rejoicing in its beauty, finds only reassurance in all this immensity of space.

Claude never painted either a tempest or the winter. In the most dramatic episodes he never seeks to move us. The *Flight into Egypt* is a pleasant journey through picturesque countries. St. Ursula sets out for her martyrdom as though going to some fête. One can scarcely pity Ishmael in the desert when one sees, in the midst of a verdant land, springs of running water at which he can easily slake

his thirst. Such art is beneficent and is intended to delight us. It is like a hymn of gratitude and love, telling of the goodness of life and the beauty of a nature that is always harmonious and serene. Italy had found in Poussin and Claude two masters able to comprehend it and to express its hidden poetry. The purely decorative preoccupations of their followers contributed to the formation of that conventional branch of painting known as Historical Landscape. In this we have many second-rate and insignificant compositions, for which neither Poussin nor Claude can be held responsible. After them came painters who did not trouble to go direct to nature for their studies, but who were content with imitating their glorious predecessors, painting Italy before visiting it or without ever seeing it.

Then came copiers of these copiers, Pierre Patel, Étienne Allegrain, and many others whose works have neither style nor anything natural about them. Such painters brought about a legitimate reaction against a branch of art which they gradually discredited.

Étienne Allegrain

Landscape with Moses Rescued from the Nile,
last quarter of the 17th - first third of the 18th century.
Oil on canvas, 88 x 114.8 cm.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



In French art, as in French society, the pompous magnificence of Louis XIV's reign was to give way to the charming grace and elegance of the masters of the French school during the Regency and the reign of Louis XV. At their head was one of the greatest of French painters, Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), who gave importance to landscape in his works. He had been instinctively attracted by the Venetian school and by Rubens; however, inspired by them, he also retained his own originality.

The background of his *fêtes galantes* is no mere daub. There seems to be real air around the fantastic *Pierrot*, also known as *Gilles*; the ground is firm. Together with those lilies of the valley and those coquettish young women, the shady trees and peaceful water of the park would make us believe in the reality of *La Finette* (*The Delicate*

Musician), *Mezzetin*, *The Casual Lover*, and of many another frivolous and fascinating individuals. In *Pilgrimage to Cythera*, also referred to as *Embarkation for Cythera*, the background disappears in vague outlines, but the starting place and the foreground with the band of pilgrims are painted from nature. The branches of the trees

Antoine Watteau,
The Pilgrimage to the Island of Cythera, 1718.
Oil on canvas, 129 x 194 cm.
Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard,
The Swing, 1767.
Oil on canvas, 81 x 64.2 cm.
The Wallace Collection, London.





are intertwined and the roses are blossoming under their trembling leaves. All the forms and harmonious tones were copied faithfully by the clever draughtsman and fine colourist, in whom were personified the exquisite qualities of a very original art.

Hubert Robert (1733-1808) was attracted to Rome when quite young. In literature, just as in the gardens, ruins were very much in vogue and, stimulated by the excavations of Herculaneum and by Johann Joachim Winckelmann's publications, the study of archaeology began to find fervent disciples. Robert devoted himself to the study of the monuments of antiquity with extreme ardour, and the numerous drawings executed by him in Rome are a proof of his skill. During the twelve years he was away from France, Robert kept all the studies he made of the buildings and antique sculpture that he saw. On returning to France he was made a Member of the Academy, keeper of the King's paintings and designer of the Royal Gardens. He delighted in suggesting the contrast of modern life among the august ruins of the past. He portrayed the strange vicissitudes of those temples and palaces which had become the refuge of vagabonds and poverty-stricken men. During the Revolution, Robert was arrested; while in prison he painted the portraits of his companions in distress and retraced the dramatic scenes he witnessed. After the Revolution he continued to work as hard as ever, and died at his easel in 1808.

During his excursion to the South of Italy, Robert had with him another companion, Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806). This young man was even more gifted as a painter. Fragonard did not limit himself to any special style but attempted all. We will not expand on his work or his love scenes. Nor will we expand on the various landscapes in which he imitates the Dutch. When he had nature before him, either in Provence or in Italy, Fragonard reproduced it faithfully. In some of his pictures, as in *Shepherd Playing the Flute Whilst a Peasant Girl Listens* or *The Swing*, in which picturesque scenery plays an important part, he almost equals Watteau.

Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes (1750-1819), working on totally different lines, was the stubborn defender of academic landscape painting, not only in his pictures, which were as devoid of truth as they were of style, but also in his book entitled *Elements of practical*

Hubert Robert,
Imaginary View of the Grande Galerie in Ruins, 1796.
Oil on canvas, 115 x 145 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

perspective with reflections and counsels on landscape painting, published in 1800. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, simultaneously with these attempts at a more sincere study of nature, there was a reaction against excessive virtuosity. Strangely enough, Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825), was the pioneer of that return to classical tradition which architecture had initiated. Picturesque nature is entirely absent from his work. It makes its appearance again with Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1835) in historical painting and adds poignant interest to *Napoleon on the Battlefield of Eylau, February 9, 1807*. Under a dark and gloomy winter sky, as far as the eye can see, the snow lays its shroud over the corpses lying on the immense plain.

The introduction of landscape is also quite effective with Gros' pupil, Théodore Géricault (1791-1824). He obtains a most emotive effect in his *Raft of the Medusa*, with the threatening sea and the wretched raft on which the poor creatures, who have escaped from the disaster, are united in their common misery.

The doctrines between which modern art was wavering became more definite with the two masters who were soon to be at the head of the French school. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) went farther back than David into the past. He turned to Raphael and to the Greeks for the models of beauty and style. Usually nature is absent from his pictures, as his subjects are chiefly interiors. We do not think he ever painted a tree. His influence was nevertheless greatly felt in all arts in connection with drawing, as he insisted on greater care with regard to form and style. This influence is seen in the work of certain landscapists who were his contemporaries or his pupils.

Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) aimed neither at depicting abstract beauty nor scrupulous correctness of form. His one aim was to depict character. With him everything was life and movement, and in his work all nature was associated with the expression of human sentiment. He was deeply affected by the great sights of nature, which he observed closely and endeavoured to portray in all their different aspects. There is the water in his *Death of Ophelia*, the desolate moor in *King Lear Scene VII, Act IV*, the landscape of his *Massacre of Chios*, and the frozen pool in his *Death of Charles the Bold*. He draws his inspirations from all countries and from the history and literature of all nations. He took refuge at Champrosay in order to have some quiet time, but even there he could not resign himself to idleness. He painted the flowers in his garden, the scenery, and the various effects of light. Everything was a subject for study. When his health gave way and he was in a state of fever, he would remain nearly all day without food, in order to reserve his strength for his work.



Eugène Delacroix,

Scene of the massacre at Chios; Greek families awaiting death or slavery, 1824.
Oil on canvas, 419 x 354 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Antoine-Jean Gros,

Napoléon at the Battlefield of Eylau, February 9th, 1807, 1808.
Oil on canvas, 521 x 784 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Richard Parkes Bonington,

A Scene on the French Coast, c.1825.
Watercolour and pencil on paper, 21.3 x 34.2 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.
(p. 164-165)

This ceaseless labour, although it caused him suffering, was necessary to Delacroix and he was entirely absorbed by it. Devoted as he was to nature, he was interested in the first efforts of French landscapists of his time and he encouraged them in the new paths they had struck out. In order to stimulate them, he called their attention to the progress already realised in that way by their neighbours. He knew Richard Parkes Bonington, a young artist who was born in England, but who went to France at an early age and was destined, during his short life, to serve as a link between the two countries.

Richard Parkes Bonington (1802-1828) was only fifteen when his taste for painting was so strongly developed that he went to Paris to study art. Whenever the young artist had leisure he escaped to the country and gave himself up to drawing and painting from nature. He painted pictures of Paris and its suburbs, and he also went to the north coast of France. There is nothing to equal his clearing of mists and his mornings with that silvery tone in which he delighted. Unfortunately his outdoor studies in damp districts affected his health, and tuberculosis was the result; but he was always enthusiastic and zealous in his work. He started for Normandy, in the summer of 1828, with Paul Huet. He had scarcely reached Rouen when he was obliged to return to Paris, and from there to London, where he died in 1828 in his twenty-fifth year.

Paul Huet was rather younger than Bonington, but was not influenced by him. His temperament was more similar to Constable. Huet has been reproached with imitating Constable, and the dates might seem to justify this accusation, but it must be remembered that the works of the English landscapist were not known until somewhat late, and that they were exhibited in France for the first time in 1824. He experienced trials and difficulties of all kinds. He was born in Paris in 1804. It was decided that he should enter the École Normale Supérieure, for which he felt no vocation. After a few years of college life, he began to study painting under Gros, but was compelled to leave this studio on account of his father's financial difficulties. Shortly afterwards his father died and Huet went to Pierre-Narcisse Guérin's studio. He gave drawing lessons, painted portraits and executed engravings and lithographs. Whenever he had a little time to spare he had only to go along the Seine for picturesque subjects for his pencil. Seguin Island was one of Huet's favourite studies.

Paul Huet exhibited in the Salon of 1827 for the first time and was highly appreciated by his brother artists. His success was well deserved on account of the new revelations to be found in his work. The artist had not studied enough to be able to content









himself with the simplicity of nature. He aimed at emotion and borrowed from Victor Hugo quotations or romantic titles for his works. Whilst continuing to give expression to his compositions, Huet soon gave up these literary tendencies and obtained the eloquence he required from the resources of his own art. He considered all methods good for these studies, and from each one he obtained the special help it was able to give. With his pen and ink drawings, which obliged him to be more accurate in regard to form, he prepared himself for mastering etching and he was the first artist in the French school to give that a place of

honour. He soon ventured onto more complex subjects and executed them methodically and well. Watercolour must have been a relaxation to Huet after the strain of such a task. It allowed him to depict the most fleeting aspects of nature. He would paint a flight of clouds, the clearing of the mist or a sea shore with a few poor trees clinging to the earth and shaken by the wind; all the details in these rapid sketches have a certain touch of force and truthfulness. Instead of being weakened by this assiduous communion with nature, Huet's imagination developed under its discipline. In his first pictures, he had given himself up to the exuberance of the wildest romanticism under the pretext of poetry. Now he could depict the most dramatic episodes as if he had witnessed them.

After such excursions into the world of imagination, Huet returned with delight to his studies of Normandy or of the

Eugène Isabey,
The Wooden Bridge, 19th century.
Oil on canvas, 27 x 40 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

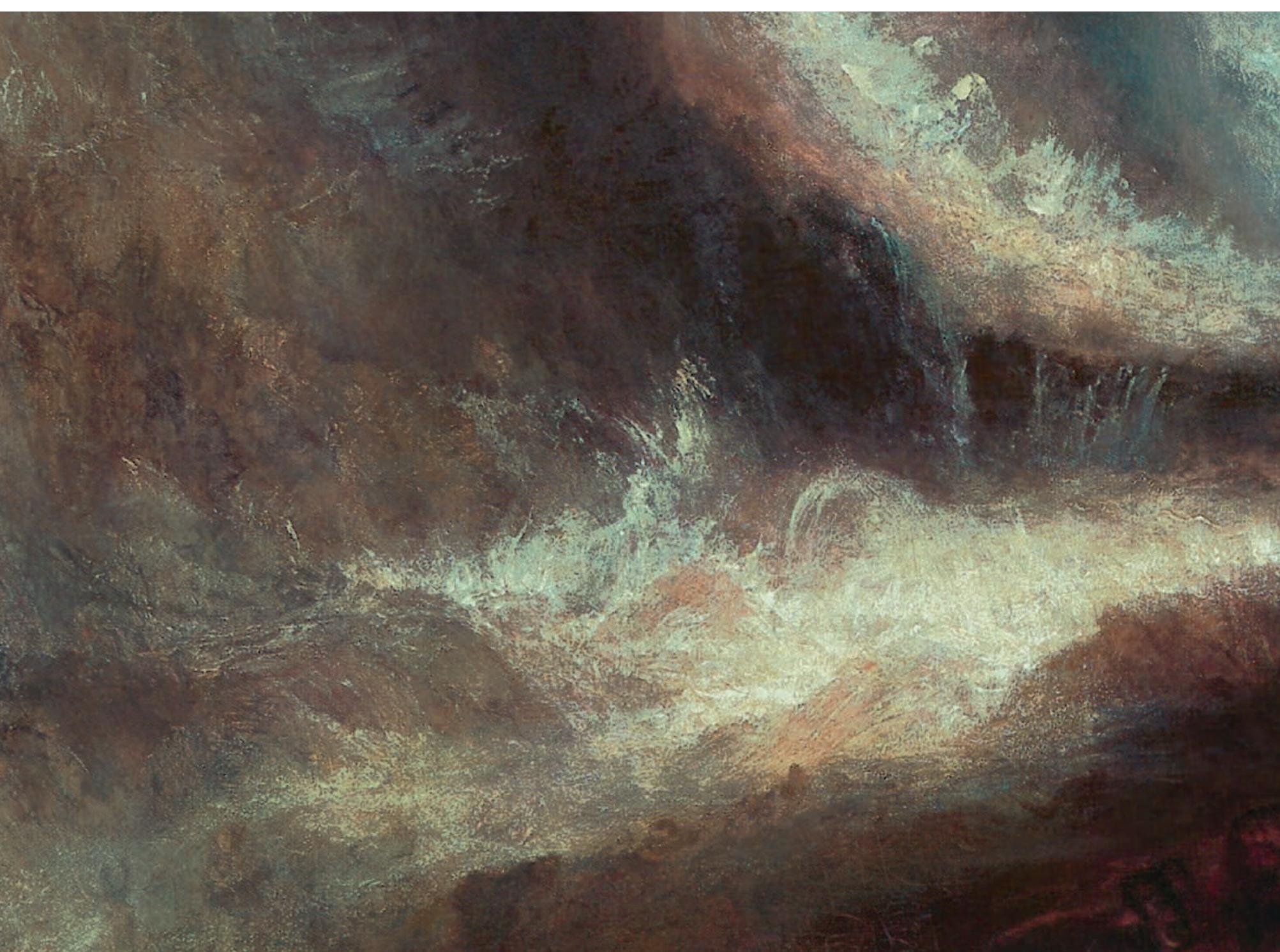


suburbs of Paris. The pictures he sent to the Salon were always favourably noticed. In January, 1869, the courageous artist was seized with apoplexy whilst at his easel. By the wholesome example of his style, Huet helped the French school of landscape painting to work on new approaches. He was one of the pioneers who not only saw the 'Promised Land', but entered it along with the glorious phalanx of contemporary landscapists that followed him.

Before closing this list of the precursors of the French school, we must mention Eugène Isabey (1803-1886), who was born in Paris. Unlike Huet, he was brought up in the midst of the most elegant society. Although he was the son of Jean-Baptiste Isabey, the Emperor's miniaturist, Isabey never thought of painting until comparatively late. Like most of the landscapists of that time, he was greatly attracted by Normandy. His lithographs show a

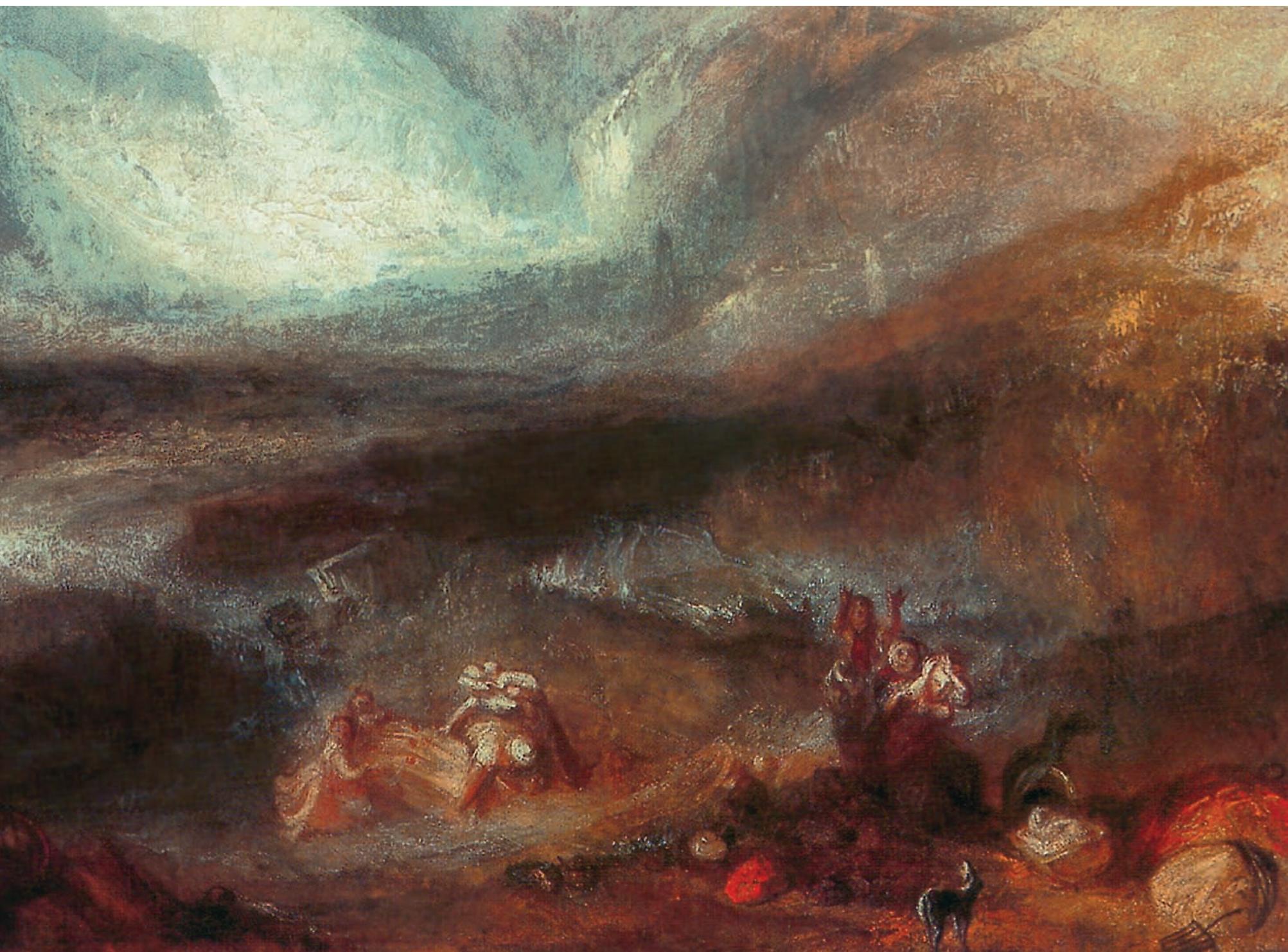
perfect comprehension of effect and great correctness of observation, and his sketches in oil and his watercolours from nature have the same qualities. Owing to the excessive facility with which he worked, it is impossible for us to feel any more interest in them than he did himself in spite of the variety of subjects which he painted. The spectator remains indifferent on looking at the fishing scenes, embarkations, marriages, and processions, which he continued to paint until the very end of his life. Before this improvising, of which he was guilty in his old age, he held a most honourable place in the French school.

Pierre Henri de Valenciennes,
Storm by the Banks of a Lake, late 18th century.
Oil on canvas, 39.8 x 52 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Chapter 5

Landscapists of the English School





Art, Nature, and Turner

England had, for a long time, been a powerful and prosperous nation. She gave birth to an author like William Shakespeare, to philosophers like Francis Bacon and Issac Newton, but she had not yet produced a single artist. Her sovereigns had felt art to be ornamental to a Court, and on several occasions they had endeavoured to entice some of the great artists of the continent to their country. Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck, among the more famous ones, had made longer or shorter visits to London and had received all the royal favours possible and been patronised by various members of the aristocracy. In the collections which the latter were making, the famous landscapists held an important place. Among these Claude Lorrain, J. van Ruisdael, Meindert Hobbema, and Aelbert Cuyp, who were all greatly in favour, must have exercised considerable influence over the formation and development of the first English landscapists.

English writers had comprehended and depicted the beauties of nature before the artists. We all know what an amount of poetical interest is added to the most moving episodes of Shakespeare's dramas by the scenery described by him in a few striking words. The moor where the witches promise the kingdom to Macbeth; the mist-covered meadows, all bathed in dew, where the little spirits of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* disport themselves. The lake poets omitted no detail in the description of the country which was to be the setting for their compositions. Finally, there was the creation of English gardens, in which, setting aside the symmetry and geometrical stiffness, until then in honour, the landscape gardeners appointed to lay out the grounds of princely residences were the first to respect nature. All this proves the increasing love of nature towards the middle of the eighteenth century. It seems, therefore, as though everything had been prepared for a school of landscape painting in England, although art had been very late in taking advantage of the resources which nature offered with such marvellous prodigality. Painters remained indifferent to its picturesque beauties, and when Richard Wilson (1714-1782), after acquiring a certain reputation as a portrait painter, thought of taking the subjects for his pictures from nature, it was to Italy that he went in search for them. He usually chose views of Italy or academic landscapes, in which the influence of Claude Lorrain was evident.

Wilson was able to settle in Wales, in the village of Llanberis which is situated in the very heart of the country. He had begun to feel the inadequacy of the collection of studies from which he had been drawing his inspirations for too long a time without any opportunity of adding to them. Until his death in 1782, in his seventieth year, he remained there, and his later works show, by their more vivid colours and their less conventional subjects, the happy effect that a closer



J.M.W. Turner,

Valley of Aosta: Snowstorm, Avalanche, and Thunderstorm (detail), 1836-1837.

Oil on canvas, 92.2 x 123 cm.

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

(p. 168-169)

Old Crome (John Crome),

The Poringland Oak, c.1818-1820.

Oil on canvas, 125.1 x 100.3 cm.

Tate Gallery, London.

(p. 170)

Richard Wilson,

View in Windsor Great Park, c.1765.

Oil on canvas, 106.9 x 140 cm.

National Museum Wales, Cardiff.



communion with nature had had upon his style. A painter, born in 1768, John Crome, deserves to be mentioned for the frankness and the accuracy of his interpretations of nature. "Old" Crome specially distinguished himself by pursuing truth. Crome, with scruples that were then new, respected in every way the characteristics of the places he painted, though he depicted the wildest and most forlorn spots. His conscientiousness and his example caused him to have many imitators and he grouped around him in Norfolk a little provincial school, which subsequently produced several distinguished artists.

The name of Turner finally effaced those of many of his less known brother-artists. This brief summing up will perhaps serve to show what landscape painting in England was before Turner and how, after the imitations of Claude and of the Flemish and Dutch painters, it had gradually freed itself from given formulas, in consequence of a direct study of nature.

J.M.W. Turner,
The Festival upon the Opening of the Vintage at Macon, c.1803.
Oil on canvas, 146 x 237.5 cm.
Museums Sheffield, Sheffield.

Joseph Mallord William Turner, the son of a barber, was born in London in 1775. He received a second-rate education, which he did not attempt to improve. His father had a number of artists among his customers and, when the boy's predilection for art manifested itself he was not thwarted at home. He first studied with an artist whose strong point was the drawing of flowers. In 1788, he went to Thomas Malton for lessons in perspective, and also frequented the studio of the architect Thomas Hardwick. He attended the Royal Academy of Art for the study of the human figure. He earned a little money by colouring drawings and engravings and subsequently by portrait painting. Whenever the young man had any spare time, he used to go to the Thames to sketch from nature. Turner adopted watercolours, with which he had great success all his life. At that time he was glad to sell his little watercolour drawings for two shillings or half-a-crown each. He exhibited them in his father's showcases and some of them were bought by Dr. Thomas Munro. Lord Yarborough and two of his friends supplied Turner with the means necessary for visiting other continents, so that he might study the works of the Great Masters. He was also commissioned by several publishers to supply them with views of the



most picturesque districts in England, for a series of illustrated publications which were at that time very much in favour.

At the age of fifteen, Turner exhibited at the Royal Academy for the first time. His pictures attracted attention, and the increased number of those accepted each year proved the appreciation he received in spite of his extreme youth. In 1799, he became an Associate and three years later, when he was only twenty-seven years old, he was made a Member of the Royal Academy.

Turner was a short, thickset man, unsociable, careless in his dress, and cared little about manners. He was incapable of expressing his ideas verbally and this caused him to become somewhat misanthropic. He was devoted to his work, rose early and remained at his task all day, resolutely refusing to receive visitors. As he worked easily, he was able to produce a great many pictures. His first works gave evidence of his keen observation of nature and of the influence exercised over him by the Flemish and Dutch masters he had studied in the English collections. He was, from the first, greatly fascinated by effects of light and shade. He painted seapieces very cleverly. There is a strong

breeze blowing in this picture and the dramatic effect is well thought out. Side by side with these subjects obtained from nature, he also tried his hand at compositions inspired by mythology and the Bible. These, however, are merely episodes introduced afterwards, as neither the style nor the character of the landscape is in accordance with the subject. Turner merely saw in these subjects a pretext for purely decorative compositions which, more frequently than not, were borrowed from Claude Lorrain, who haunted Turner's mind at this time.

It would seem as though he were then only feeling his way, yet his attempts on such different lines had a certain assurance and boldness. His execution, year by year, acquired greater breadth and certainty. *Calais Pier*, which he exhibited in 1803, is one of the most remarkable of his productions. Threatened by a storm, some fishing boats are to be seen endeavouring either to put out to sea or to return to the harbour. Meanwhile, on the pier, the women are anxiously watching "their men"

J.M.W. Turner,
The Bay of Baiae, with Apollo and the Sibyl, 1823.
Oil on canvas, 145.4 x 237.5 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.



struggling with the raging sea. In the boats, shaken and tossed at will by the waves, every man is at his post, acquitted himself courageously of his task. We see from the accuracy with which different perspectives are given that in the midst of this human tumult and this confusion of the elements, Turner, like the sailors, preserves his sangfroid. The raging water, too, maintains a relative equilibrium, while around the boats the waves either form a deep hollow or rise up high and foaming, as though urged on by some irresistible force. The eloquent rhythm of the lines and the transparency of the blue-green water on which the falling light is admirably distributed, the execution so natural and so wonderfully suited to such a subject – all this is logical yet apparently unstudied, animated yet pictorial. In spite of the multiplicity of the details, there is not one too many; everything tends towards the unity and general perfection of the whole.

As can readily be imagined, this was a branch of art likely to be appreciated by a maritime nation. It gave expression to the representation of a sight to be seen daily, the truthfulness of which

could therefore be tested, and accordingly Turner's pictures were very much in favour among his fellow countrymen. By making a few concessions, and particularly by eliminating from his palette certain bituminous colours of which he was too fond, he might easily have made great progress. The vein he had struck was a good one and subjects would have been plentiful. Since he did not give up painting such episodes, they subsequently occupied a small place in his work. Instead of entering into closer communion with nature, by means of more continued study, he gave himself up to painting purely decorative effects. Turner's visit to France and Switzerland in 1802

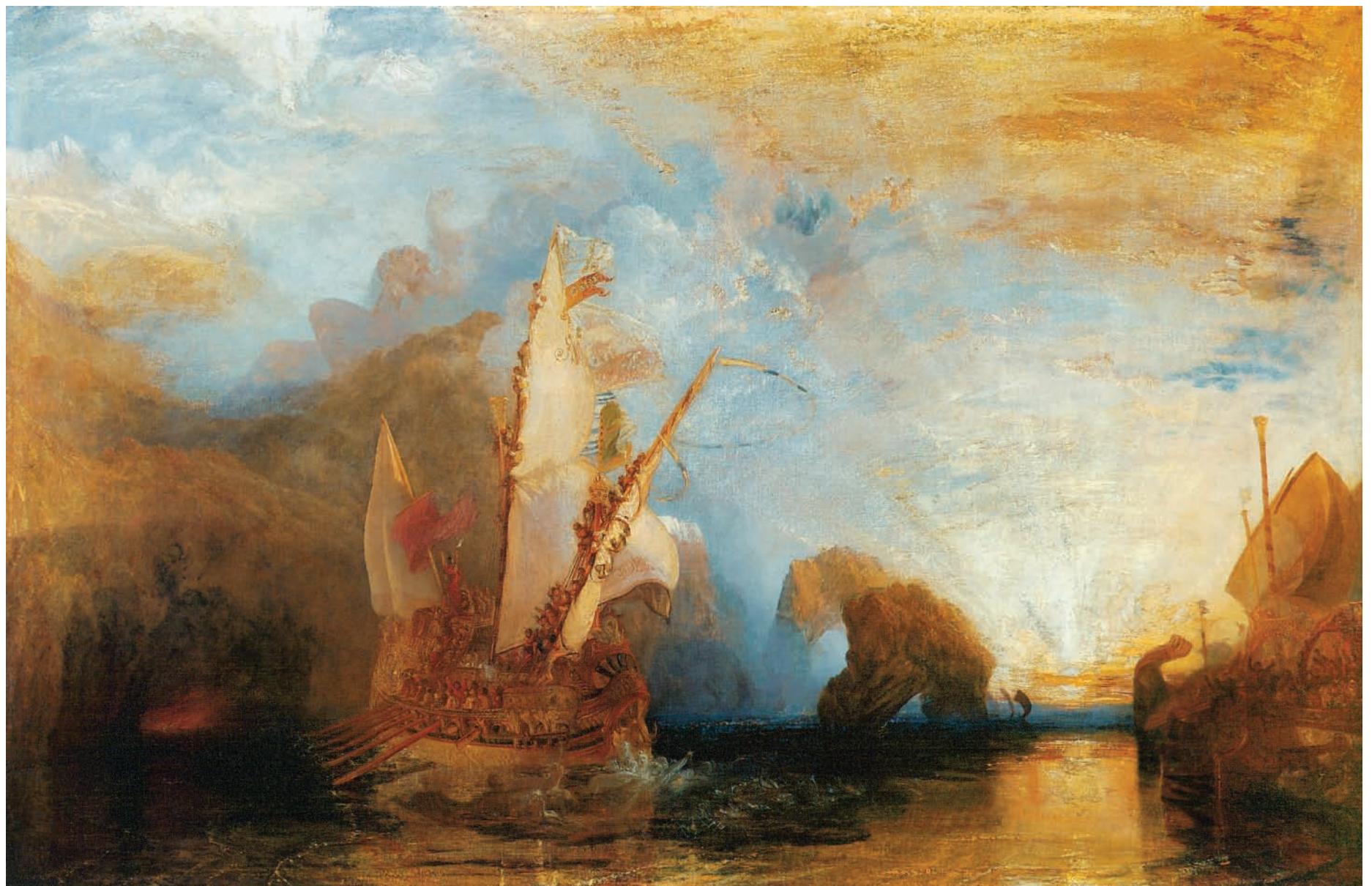
J.M.W. Turner,
Dido Building Carthage or The Rise of the Carthaginian Empire, 1815.
Oil on canvas, 155.5 x 230 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

J.M.W. Turner,
Dolbadern Castle, 1800.
Oil on canvas, 119.4 x 90.2 cm.
Royal Academy of Arts, London.





J.M.W. Turner,
Sun Rising through Vapour, 1807.
Oil on canvas, 134 x 179.5 cm.
The National Gallery, London.



J.M.W. Turner,
Ulysses deriding Polyphemus - Homer's Odyssey, 1829.
Oil on canvas, 132.5 x 203 cm.
The National Gallery, London.



may have had something to do with this transformation of his talent. He was certainly not inactive during this excursion to countries so different from his own. He brought a harvest of numerous studies back with him from the continent. But a series of rapid and extremely varied impressions could not have left very distinct and lasting memories. He was obliged, therefore, to be content with summary information and to have recourse to methods that were anything but thorough, in order to mask the insufficiency of his material. Hence he returned to the forms he already knew and to colour schemes devised from his palette, instead of taking advantage of the endless information with which nature would have supplied him.

From this time forth he was less exacting with himself and not so scrupulously accurate in the exercise of his art. There is more reticence and a truer observation of nature in the *Sun Rising through*

Vapour, which Turner exhibited in 1807 and he was pleased with it himself. The effect of the morning mist, through which the rays of a pale sun are piercing, an effect very frequently seen in Northern countries, is cleverly rendered by the artist, while the undecided tones of the sky and of the greyish background, steeped in a damp atmosphere, set off to advantage the brilliant colours of the foreground.

In the various pictures for which Turner could obtain the subjects in his own part of the world, nature itself afforded him all the assistance he needed and provided him with all the necessary details. He took more liberty with landscapes of foreign countries and with those which were completely imaginary, as he could then give his fancy free rein.

Turner, carried away by his enthusiasm, was inclined to take subjects which do not belong to the domain of painting. He mistook for boldness a wild audacity, which he failed to make convincing. The *Cottage Destroyed by an Avalanche* is an example of this and also *Hannibal Crossing the Alps*, a picture which is absolutely incoherent. Here, in the midst of the wild snowstorm raging on the mountain tops, the Carthaginian army can scarcely be distinguished,

J.M.W. Turner,
Heidelberg: Sunset, c.1842.
Watercolour and pencil on paper, 38 x 55.2 cm.
Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



or even the Alps themselves, while the mountains disappear in the weirdly-shaped clouds overhanging them. When Turner takes subjects of this kind, his pictures leave us indifferent; one feels, by the coldness with which he attempts to depict such scenes, that he is not moved by them himself, and that he is trying to make up for the insufficiency of his study by his extravagance.

Such boldness, unjustifiable as it is, was peculiar to him, yet when he attempted subjects similar to those treated by Claude Lorrain, he was a very timid imitator of the great French landscapist. A long time before he had seen Italy, he had painted it, and he attempted to surpass Claude in depicting its beauties, and to go farther than the latter in expressing the charm of light over the immensity of space. In order to give more likelihood to his conceptions he used mythological episodes and introduced innumerable figures. Turner had neither the candour nor the delicate instinct which enabled Claude to introduce his simple figures satisfactorily, and to always put them in the right place. It is only by the titles of such pictures that there is any chance of obtaining the key to the riddles he proposes. A catalogue is necessary in order to see who his figures represent and what they are doing. He only knew

the *Aeneid* through John Dryden and it was from an imitation of Virgil that he composed his imitation of Claude. Its title, which he put in a corner of the canvas together with the date, 1815, and his signature, was *Dido Building Carthage*, also known as *The Rise of the Carthaginian Empire*. The work is not without merit, but the composition was obviously inspired by Claude. He gives us a long line of palaces and colonnades as far as one can see on the banks of a sheet of tranquil water, in which a luminous sky is reflected. With the exception of a few touches of lemon colour, which are too pronounced, the colouring is harmonious and brilliant, and the gradations of the atmosphere are well rendered from the foreground to the horizon. The whole handling is more delicate and more sober than usual, and one might imagine that this picture was a copy of one of Claude's, if, by the side of this *Dido*, on the same wall of the National Gallery, there were not one of the most admirable seapieces painted by Claude in

J.M.W. Turner,
Rain, Steam, and Speed – The Great Western Railway, 1844.
Oil on canvas, 91 x 121.8 cm.
The National Gallery, London.



his maturity, *The Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba*, dated 1648. Anyone not aware of the facts of the case would be inclined to blame those responsible for the hanging of the pictures for placing these two so near to each other, but Turner himself was responsible for it, as he expressed a wish that his picture should be hung there.

Turner was haunted, as it were, by Claude. It was this fact which induced him to publish, in the same way as the *Liber Veritatis*, his *Liber Studiorum* (Book of Studies), a collection of etchings from drawings he had done from nature. Although a great number of these etchings show, not only the influence exercised over him by Claude, but also a distinct imitation of his illustrious predecessor, there is nevertheless marked originality and, at the same time, there are rare qualities in the rendering of the various picturesque elements of landscape.

It is almost inconceivable that anyone who could draw so admirably and who was so gifted, should, instead of improving himself in this branch of art, have launched out at a certain period of his career along quite other lines and expressed himself in such extraordinary colour schemes. It may have been that the requirements of constant production, for the sake of quick returns, induced Turner to content himself with studies that were less thorough. Turner had made an independent position for himself and not only was he well-to-do, but rich. In 1812, the artist bought a better house on Queen Anne Street, where he lived until his death, but without ever having any repairs or cleaning done to it. He lived in the midst of such dirt and disorder that his pictures, reared up against each other along the wall, gradually deteriorated.

He would not receive visitors and was always trying to keep people in ignorance of his whereabouts. Without giving any notice of his various absences he would leave home without letting anyone have his address. At other times, in sudden fits of generosity, he would give large sums of money to fellow artists in need. As a rule, however, without caring any more for what was said of him than he did for the conventionalities, he lived alone.

An attempt has been made to classify Turner's works in three distinct periods, answering to the characteristic transformations of his talent. It does not seem to us that such a classification is in accordance with the facts. Instead of three distinct styles, comprised within fixed dates, it would be better to study in a general way the painter's tendency gradually to free himself from the conscientious scruples which he had first manifested, to give up those early qualities of correct

J.M.W. Turner,
Calais Pier, with French Poissards Preparing for Sea: an English Packet Arriving, 1803.
 Oil on canvas, 172 x 240 cm.
 The National Gallery, London.

drawing and to aim, above everything, at the extraordinary colouring and the effective contrasts which, as time went on, became his great preoccupation. He finally ended in purely imaginative landscape painting. Continuity was not one of his characteristics, as we find that there were momentary hesitations and even returns to his earlier style. These were caused, no doubt, by the close study of nature which his work sometimes demanded, and at times this restrained the increasing daring of his imaginative work.

In 1815 a landscape inspired by England was also painted, which is entitled *Crossing the Brook*. The general composition is perhaps borrowed from Claude, but Turner renders the aspect of the little winding river running slowly through a picturesque district with great charm. Such compositions, however, were sporadic with him, and they became rare. His own imagination now supplied the subjects of his compositions. He preferred those which gave him more scope for that exaggeration of contrast and extreme brilliancy of colouring which had become his chief thought. Being proficient in watercolour, he used it as a basis for his pictures, and not only did he leave this preparation in a great measure without any covering, but even when the picture was painted in oil he would touch it up with body colour. The repeated layers of glazing and of paint put on with the knife, to which he had recourse, led at times to unforeseen and effective results. These experiments, sometimes satisfactory, sometimes the reverse, were therefore more or less dependent on chance, and, in any case, there was always a great risk with them as regards the preservation of the painting.

He pronounced his intention of depicting a given place, but as he had insufficient notes and gave his imagination free play, the result was frequently far from satisfactory. In his *View of Orvieto* and *View of Heidelberg*, those who know these localities would have great difficulty in recognising them from Turner's pictures. It is obvious, therefore, that when he attempted to place scenes from mythology or history in the scenery that he considered suitable for them, there was little truth and probability, even in pictures in themselves. Without the catalogue it would be impossible to discover the titles of such subjects as *Agrippina Landing with the Ashes of Germanicus*. Turner's representations of the places where these episodes took place have nothing in common with Italy or with Greece. In the *Bay of Baiae with Apollo and the Sibyl*, exhibited in 1823 after the artist's first journey to Italy in 1819, the landscape is scarcely anything but a collection of heterogeneous details arbitrarily assembled. On close observation it is possible to discover the Tivoli cascades and some of the ruins of the Roman Forum by the side of the Mole of Naples.

It is above all, in the compositions inspired by scenes from antiquity, that the absolute lack of proportion is evident in Turner's later work.



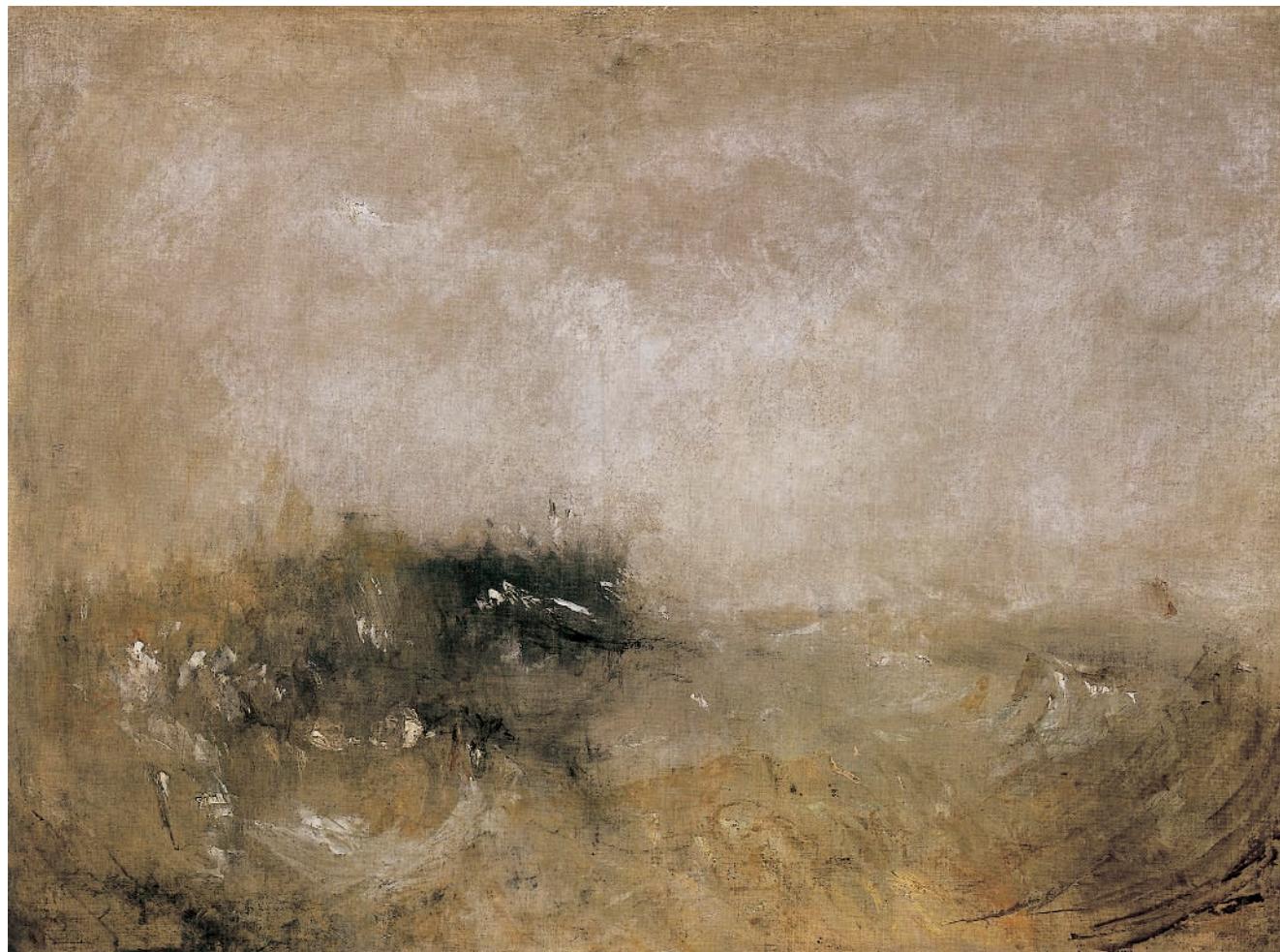
Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus, painted in 1829, is so strange that it borders on madness. The colouring is as wild as are the forms, and the eye seeks in vain something restful among all these flying boat sails with their startling colours, rocks of a hundred different shapes, water of a harsh blue against crude red, and a sky where, by way of a sunset, the artist has given fireworks with various coloured rockets bursting everywhere. In order to give still freer play to these picturesque escapades, Turner chose subjects which lent themselves to such violent antitheses and allowed of all these extravagances, as in the struggle between the elements in *The Snowstorm*.

After his last visit to Italy in 1840, the memory of Venice, which had made a great impression on him on account of its manifold beauties, caused him to hold his wild imagination in check for a time. In several of his pictures he reproduces with great charm the rich harmonies peculiar to the city of lagoons, giving the light silvery colours of its buildings, and also the brilliancy of its changing skies. But this was only a momentary halt in the midst of

J.M.W. Turner,
Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps, 1812.
Oil on canvas, 146 x 237.5 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.

the irresistible current that was carrying him away. The pearly, rainbow colours which Venice had shown him became, under his heavy touch, incandescence and prismatic illuminations, which he lavished everywhere without any respect to the style of his picture. The palaces and buildings of all kinds which Giovanni Antonio Canaletto gives with perhaps too great an emphasis on the stiff structure and exact perspective, seem, in Turner's pictures, to be protesting against their immobility and to be in an inexpressible state of confusion. Not content even with unstable lines and vague colours, the artist, impatient of all laws, soon renounced such subjects, as they were too real for him. Fantastic themes appealed much more to him, and into these he plunged wildly. In that other equally celebrated work *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway*, in which the painter depicts a Western train rushing at full speed through a thick fog, there is neither logic nor adherence to convention to be found.

Breaking gradually away from all the most elementary canons of his art, Turner gave himself up to the daring of his own imagination. In spite of this, it was just at this moment that the well-known English critic, John Ruskin, praised his works and proclaimed him the reviver of landscape painting. The excessive praise that Ruskin lavished on the



extremely disparate work of Turner could not fail to increase the already existing vanity of the latter, and we have sufficient proof of this in his will. Turner bequeathed to the National Gallery 19,000 studies, sketches, and watercolour drawings, as well as 362 pictures, either finished or unfinished. Among the former, of the 105 which were to be hung, a considerable number should have been excluded. The inequality of it, the placing of the pictures according to the instructions of the artist, the comparisons thus suggested, the incoherencies revealed in most of them, and their disregard of nature detract from the effect which such an exhibition might have produced. In spite of the enormous fortune he made, Turner continued to live in the dirtiest of dens in the midst of severe untidiness. Wretched and misanthropic as he was, he always tried to keep the address of his various abodes secret, like a criminal hiding from the police. He was living in one of his chance abodes at Chelsea, under the name of Mr. Booth, when he took ill. A letter found in one of his pockets was the only way in which his identity was established a short time before his death, on the 19th of December, 1851.

Turner, endowed though he was with remarkable gifts, neglected to improve his natural talent through a persevering study of nature. He was undoubtedly an investigator, and among his daring

experiments there are some which have since been turned to advantage by others. He certainly helped to make the palette of our landscapists lighter and gayer, and, following his example, they have shunned sombre tones, leaving to time alone the work of making old pictures.

In his hyperbolical language, Turner aims at the sublime, and sometimes he violates the most elementary rules of grammar. He amplifies in the most extravagant way, and accumulates the most unsuitable details at will. He does not have the sense of harmony which, whilst bringing them together, subordinates them to the unity of the whole. The brusque and summary way of handling a subject that he inaugurated has since become commonplace with landscapists. All those who, like Turner, think that they can make up for insufficient study by bold workmanship, feel that they are authorised, in his name, in substituting mere technical skill for that intelligent search for the expressive qualities which are the real charm and poetry of landscape.

J.M.W. Turner,
Rough Sea, c.1840-1845.
Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 121.9 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.



John Constable

By not going to nature for the teaching that it alone can give, we can see the systematic error with which Turner was to finally end. It was just the opposite with John Constable, another English landscapist, and one of Turner's contemporaries. With Constable it was the constant searching after truth that constituted the deep and wholesome poetry which emanates from his works. In order to know more about this singularly interesting artist, we could not have better guides than the books that have been written on him. The first is by C. R. Leslie and was written soon after Constable's death, chiefly from the letters and papers of the artist. The second is by C. J. Holmes, and the author proves himself in this book to be a just and competent critic.

John Constable was born in 1776 at East Bergholt, a village in Suffolk. Situated between the Stour and the Orwell, this somewhat remote district forms a very picturesque peninsula, an ideal place for landscapists. Constable had always been passionately fond of nature, and he showed his inclination for painting when quite young.

Constable had been intended by his parents for a clerical career, but on account of his lack of inclination it was decided that he should succeed his father in the management of two windmills that he owned near Bergholt, and a watermill at Flatford. His visits to the mills greatly increased his love of nature. For hours he would stand leaning on the balustrade observing the clouds and the slowness or quickness with which they moved. He could then tell what weather they were likely to have for the working of the mill. By taking notes of what he saw, he learned to know something of the changes that the play of light brings into the character of the landscape, making it either gay or sombre. He felt the longing increase within him to devote his whole life to depicting its hidden beauty. He had no guide to give him advice and he was obliged to educate himself as best he could for his artistic work. He met with very many difficulties and also with much discouragement.

However, around 1795, Sir George Beaumont happened to visit Dedham. He was told about the young man's passionate love of painting and was interested in him. He gave him advice, lent him a landscape by Claude Lorrain, which Constable made an attempt to copy. The result of his efforts made him realise the necessity of acquiring the knowledge that he lacked. His father allowed him, at his earnest request, to go to London for a time and see whether he could earn his living there.

Constable started for the capital, provided with a letter of introduction to a landscapist who enjoyed a certain reputation at the time. His name was Joseph Farington. For about two years it is supposed that



J.M.W. Turner,
Crossing the Brook, 1815.
Oil on canvas, 193 x 165.1 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.

John Constable,
Boat-Building near Flatford Mill or The Shipyard, 1815.
Oil on canvas, 50.8 x 61.6 cm.
Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Landscape Painting

Constable's time was divided between Bergholt and London, where he took lessons from the engraver John Thomas Smith. The progress he made was not sufficient for Farington to have much hope for him. Discouraged, homesick, and at the end of his resources, Constable returned to his family. He then began to study from nature himself, but, insufficiently prepared for this he deplored more than ever his lack of technical knowledge. His parents made up their minds to let him have a more thorough art education.

He entered the Royal Academy of Art as a pupil in 1799, and for the next two years received a general art education. He drew from life and from the antique and attended the anatomy classes, where he studied with great zeal. In this year he was allowed to exhibit for the first time. Anxious to make money, he painted several portraits and for some time he was inclined to devote himself to historical painting, an idea he did not finally renounce until much later. But landscape painting appealed to him more than anything, and he did not enjoy studio work. It was torture to him to have to hear pictures, methods, and formulas discussed "by people who never thought about nature."

The very idea of comparing these old, black, smoky, greasy canvases with the works of God! Studios, galleries, museums, and never real creations! I have wasted two years in seeking the truth second hand, by trying to imitate the Great Masters. I will go back to Bergholt and I will try to reproduce the subjects before me. There is perhaps room in the world for a painter of nature.

The days in Bergholt slipped by happily enough, so thoroughly did he enjoy his work. In 1799 he had spent the autumn at Ipswich, and in 1800 he spent some time in the deserted park of Helmingham. He loved acquiring any kind of knowledge connected with his art, and his various studies comprised all the essential elements of landscape painting.

From an early date the sky had been the subject of his observations, and he considered it more difficult to paint than anything else. "In spite of all its brilliancy," he said, "the sky must never be too prominent; it ought to be farther away than the farthest objects. If it be too much in relief, as my own are, it is not good; but if scamped as mine never are, it is worse still." He maintained that no matter how imperfect his own execution was, he was never careless about the sky, which he considered an essential part of the composition, as it rules all things. He said it would be difficult to mention any subjects "of which it was not the keynote, the ladder, and the principal organ of sentiment." When speaking of the landscapes of Titian and Claude, he frequently quoted the remark Sir Joshua Reynolds had made to the effect that, "their skies seemed to be in touch with the

subjects of their pictures." As far as he was concerned, he continued making numerous studies of the sky until the end of his life.

Next to the sky, Constable attached extreme importance to the trees. In the country around Bergholt, the oak and ash were a veritable passion with him. He had drawn some of them so frequently that he knew all their details. These drawings are a proof of his conscientious work and of the fascination trees exercised over him. With the exception of J. van Ruisdael, no artist had hitherto given the aspect of these huge trees so faithfully; no artist had thus depicted their individual characteristics. For Constable, these trees were old friends; he spoke of them with eloquent warmth and deplored their loss as he would have done that of human beings who were dear to him.

But when Constable exhibited his first landscape, in the year 1802, he was scarcely noticed. The English were so accustomed to conventionalism that they were not prepared to appreciate the intense simplicity of his poetical and rustic style. Far from being disheartened, convinced that he was on the right path, he would not leave it, and he would never have consented to sacrifice his ideas to the prevailing taste and to imitate the masters then in favour for the sake of pleasing his contemporaries.

Constable was struck by the wealth of nature and the more he studied it, the greater was his admiration. "Since the creation of the world, no two leaves of the same tree are exactly alike. Works of art must necessarily be varied, all differing from each other." On account of the complex details in all landscape, he considered that the painter, not being able to depict them all, must choose the most significant and subordinate these to the impression he wished to produce.

After Maria Bicknell's parents had turned down Constable's proposal to marry their daughter, the artist threw himself more completely than ever into his work. The simplest themes attracted him the most, and he knew that he could only make them interesting to others by the truthfulness with which he interpreted them. When he depicted the well-known spots around Bergholt, he instinctively put something of himself into all the pictures he painted so faithfully.

By his conscientiousness and his hard work, Constable's execution gradually acquired more ease and resourcefulness. Without attempting any extravagance in his work, he began to handle his subjects with greater freedom and suppleness. He had no ambition to attract attention to his style; he merely wished to express what he

John Constable,
The Valley Farm, 1835.
Oil on canvas, 147.3 x 125.1 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.





John Constable,
Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Ground, 1823.
Oil on canvas, 87.9 x 111.8 cm.
Victoria & Albert Museum, London.





had to say. His touch was at times heavy and rather too emphasised at this period, and his colour somewhat opaque. We have an example of this in his *Boat-Building near Flatford Mill*. A fine effect was not what he aimed at in such studies. He was practising the grouping of his forms, the correct rendering of tones and the painting of pictures with more spirit. His efforts are sometimes too visible, but the public began to appreciate the honesty of his endeavours and to feel the hidden force of works inspired entirely by nature, works which were frank, sincere, and untouched by any conventionalism.

He saw the hand and spirit of God everywhere in nature, so that he always approached nature with respect. In the most diverse subjects, whether he handled pencil or brush, the characteristics of the landscape, rapidly summarised by a few strokes, were always rendered with singular truthfulness. When he was face to face with

John Constable,
The Hay Wain, 1821.
Oil on canvas, 130.2 x 185.4 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

nature, not only did he forget that he had ever seen any painting, but he made very little of what he knew himself, avoided all set formulas and attempted to be once more a beginner both with regard to drawing and colour. With the simplicity of a child, he endeavoured to express what he saw, not drawing on his experience and ability for anything except a clearer and keener vision of what really seemed essential, and a greater skill and ease of execution for interpreting the infinite diversity of the forms and harmonies before him.

The Louvre has none of Constable's important works, but a few specimens of his work are to be seen, like *Helmingham Dell* and *A View of Salisbury*. Thanks to the liberality of M. Charles Sedelmeyer, who had collected a fair number of Constable's sketches, the Louvre has recently been enriched by a drawing representing a windmill, with a mass of clouds driven by the breeze and casting their light shadows over the vast plain. It is a small and delightfully harmonious picture, in which the pureness of the atmosphere and the bright look of the country on a spring day are expressed with great truth and poetry.



Constable did not paint a great number of pictures and his chief works have remained in England. They are full of that force and truthfulness which are the outcome of a great love of nature and of persistent work. In 1819 he was made an Associate of the Royal Academy. He was not at first greatly appreciated by the general public, but year by year his admirers became more convinced of the great value of his works. His fame made its way across the Channel, since in 1824 he sold three pictures to a dealer in Paris: *The Hay Wain*, *The Lock on the Stour*, and *A View of the City of London*. Constable made it a condition that these pictures should be exhibited in the Paris Salon. "I hope," said Constable, "that they may appeal to young French painters." As a matter of fact they met with great favour and were quite a revelation to the French school of landscapists, and a stimulant to the attempts at a revival which were beginning to be made.

A fellow countryman of the artist was delighted to be able to write and tell him what he had overheard a picture fancier say to one of his friends. "Just look at those landscapes by an English artist. One

would think it was the ground itself covered with morning dew." All this was a great encouragement to Constable. His works at this time were remarkable for their originality and masterly handling. There were so many types in which he had given the most characteristic aspects of the district in which he lived. Picturesque though that district was, there was nothing imposing about its beauty. It was adapted to man and, in the various rural occupations which the change of seasons brings to him, we see him ever-present, communicating fertility and life to the earth by his labour.

The Valley Farm, is a proof of Constable's genius and of his love for his birthplace. This farm was known in the neighbourhood as "Willy Lott's house." The owner of it, who had lived there for eighty years, had never been away from home more than four days. Constable had frequently painted this group of old buildings, the foundations of

John Constable,
View of Dedham, 1814.
Oil on canvas, 55.3 x 78.1 cm.
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



which seem to be in the River Stour. There are willows and great elm trees hanging over the water, and this time he depicted the whole subject more thoroughly in its picturesque charm. Everything is gay, lifelike and pleasing in this delightful picture. When seen too closely the thick paint perhaps seems too evident; the execution is a little rough, and the bituminous pigments mixed with the bright colours are too apparent, but at a distance all this is softened down, everything harmonises and is of a strong and yet very fresh tone. In spite of the intensity of the colouring as a whole, the various perspectives are indicated with perfect correctness and, although the details are numerous, there is not one which is useless. Each one strengthens the impression and has been introduced designedly by the artist.

When Robert Vernon was in Constable's studio one day, he saw that the artist was greatly absorbed in his work and asked him if the picture he was painting were for any particular person. "Yes," replied Constable, "it is for a very particular person, it is for the person for whom I have worked all my life." This was perfectly true, as he had never troubled about public taste, but had always endeavoured to satisfy himself.

It was for himself that he painted *The Cornfield* a few years previously. Constable has succeeded in giving with singular force the impression of a warm summer afternoon. The golden corn is seen ripening under the rays of a fiery sun; the ground is covered everywhere with a thick vegetation, and the country odours from the fertile earth seem to fill the warm air. For the first time in modern landscape painting, those fresh greens appear which the early Flemish Masters had shown us, but which, after them, had disappeared again. Constable takes up once more the whole scale of these greens and handles them with perfect truthfulness. In *The Cornfield*, the brilliancy is all the more marked by the corn's contrast with the touches of red afforded by the poppies in the grass, and the vivid note of colour of the young herdsman's waistcoat, which harmonises so well with the surrounding tones.

Instead of this heavy and somewhat overpowering atmosphere, we have pure, fresh air to breathe in the picture of *Dedham Mill*. From the ground, which has been refreshed by the night, a diaphanous mist is rising, which the morning sun will soon drink in. Everything in this quiet spot is beginning to awaken to life. With joyful cries, the swallows skim the water, leaving a silvery streak behind them; the horses, which are used for towing, are stretching their limbs lazily before beginning once more their monotonous day's work; and a little distance away, a boat with a white sail seems to glide through the middle of the meadows. Everywhere there are tranquil forms, limpid and delicately shaded colours, and one's impression on looking at the picture is one of peace and of perfect serenity.



John Constable,
Mill at Gillingham, Dorset, 1825-1826.
Oil on canvas, 50.2 x 60.3 cm.
Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

John Constable,
The Cornfield, 1826.
Oil on canvas, 143 x 122 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

The banks of the Stour often attracted Constable's brush and, whilst varying his subjects, he gave to each its special significance. In one of his pictures we have a mill-wheel. The river, with its capricious windings, flows along, shaded here and there by tall, proud-looking trees. The Sluice, too, is a subject the artist has frequently taken, with all the varieties of composition and detail which he could obtain from it. As in *A Boat at the Sulice*, the intense green of the grass, and of the trees along the canal, is set off by the note of red in the costume of the man standing ready to lift the lock-gates for his boat to pass.

Salisbury Cathedral is a subject Constable painted several times. *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* shows the Cathedral somewhat in the background, while a rainbow describes its brilliant semicircle in the stormy clouds. A cart, drawn by three horses, is about to cross the ferry in the centre of the scene, and the stakes of a fence, overrun with all kinds of plants, are in the foreground. The same subject, treated more simply, but more effectually still, is to be seen in the picture now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Ground*. Constable considered it to be one of his best works. Tall trees with slender trunks frame the Cathedral, whose nave and steeple, lighted up by the setting sun, stand out against a changing sky. The freedom of the general composition and of the execution; the accuracy of the golden, lingering light falling on the walls of the building, and the happy contrast of these and the velvety blue of the sky – all this reveals the skill of the artist and justifies the preference he had for this exquisite work.

Constable's fame gradually increased in England and in Europe, but his compatriots were not as passionately enthusiastic about his pictures as they were about those by Turner. By the year 1826 he had sold a fair number of pictures and he agreed to fix a tariff, which was in reality a very moderate one, for the price of his canvases according to their size. In 1827, he went to live in a comfortable house, with a well-appointed studio, at Hampstead, whence he had a wonderful view of London from Westminster Abbey to Gravesend. On the death of his father-in-law, in 1828, he came into £20,000. He was now able to lead an independent, quiet life, in accordance with his tastes. His good fortune and his happiness were too complete to last long. After the birth of the last child, his wife did not recover her strength, and she died of tuberculosis on the 23rd of November, 1828.

The artist felt the loss of his beloved wife so deeply that for some time he was crushed with grief. In 1829 he was made a Member of the Royal Academy. He was almost indifferent now to this honour and, thinking of the pleasure this election would have given to his wife, he said sadly when he was congratulated: "They have waited until I am alone to elect me!" The reason for this tardy election was no doubt due to the little esteem in which landscape painting was held in England at

that time. His passionate love of nature helped to lull his sorrow and during his lonely walks he never ceased to observe and consult it in all difficulties. He admired its order, regularity, and grandeur, and endeavoured to exhibit some of the laws that govern it. The geologist would not discover anything with which to find fault in the logical construction of the land in Constable's pictures, any more than would the botanist with the flora. Everything is in its place in these works, without errors or anachronisms. Constable considered that in the marvellous wealth of picturesque material offered to the landscapist, reality is more expressive than the inventions of human imagination. It was by extracting the beauty from all this, by increasing it through the choice of details and by showing the bonds which unite them to each other, that his art became poetry.

Constable was also acquiring a greater knowledge of the works of the different painters whom he could study in the English collections. As soon as his means allowed it, he had bought a certain number of old pictures which he liked to have near him. The names of the artists in his little picture gallery are sufficient proof of his impartiality. He had pictures by J. van Ruisdael, Everdingen, Van Goyen, Wilson, Guardi, etc., and, together with these originals, copies he had made of Claude, Rubens, and J. van Ruisdael. Without troubling about anyone else's opinions, he admired ability wherever he found it. He had a weakness for Antoine Watteau and he said to Leslie, who was copying one of his works, "Be content if you only arrive at touching the hem of his garment." A picture by Thomas Gainsborough, which he had seen at Petworth, made the tears come into his eyes. "There is nothing special about it," he said, "but just that the artist had wanted to depict a beautiful sentiment and that he has succeeded in his desire." He admired his predecessor, Wilson, on account of his love of nature and the courage with which he endured the difficulties of his life. In 1823, after visiting Sir John Leicester's collection, he wrote:

I do not know anything broader, more solemn or more profound than Wilson's fresh landscapes. The remembrance of them haunts my mind like a delightful dream. Poor Wilson! I cannot help thinking of his lot and of his talent!

He judged the works of his brother artists with great kindness, even those which, on account of his own particular gifts, might not have appealed to him. In 1828, at the Royal Academy Exhibition, some of Turner's most daring productions were on view, and Constable, when judging them, gave them both praise and criticism. "They are only visions," he said, "and yet this is art."

John Constable,
Cottage in a Cornfield, 1817 / 1833.
Oil on canvas, 31.5 x 26.5 cm.
National Museum Wales, Cardiff.





He had, of course, made a very special study of the great landscapists and, as early as 1833, he commenced a series of lectures on them at Hampstead. In 1836, he continued these lectures at the Royal Institution. They were only known from the notes and recollections published by Leslie in his memoirs. He hoped that the taste of picture lovers would not be formed merely by the museums and collections, but that it might be based on a deep love of nature. Only those who had this love, united with intelligent culture, were, in his opinion, capable of discerning originality in artists. In his opinion, too, mannerism spoiled the rarest qualities, and he placed sincerity above skill. He had a horror of all that was mere flourish, which

John Constable,
Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows, 1831.
Oil on canvas, 151.8 x 189.9 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

was no doubt the cause of the excessive severity with which he spoke of certain landscapists of very real ability, such as J. Both and Wouwerman. He disliked their random work and he was quite unjust toward Berchem, whom he considered "absolutely devoid of poetical sentiment." He considered Giorgione and Titian among the greatest of the landscapists, while in all the branches in which Rubens excelled, he thought there was not one in which he showed higher merit than in that of landscape painting. His favourite masterpieces were *The Rainbow* by Rubens, *The Bush* by J. van Ruisdael and Rembrandt's *Mill*. He considered Rembrandt extremely individual and consequently dangerous to follow. It was his opinion that "Claude had attained the highest degree of perfection of which human art is capable." He frequently refers to Claude's perfection, to "his limpid painting, transparent as crystal." He considered the *Embarkation of St. Ursula* "the most delicate painting in semi-tone which exists." The Dutch artists, more particularly Cuyp, delighted him by the



homely simplicity of their subjects and the shrewd accuracy of their observation. The contrast which he pointed out, between such different interpretations of nature as those of Claude and J. van Ruisdael, appeared to him as convincing proof of the multiplicity and diversity of paths along which genius may travel to arrive at the summit.

Keen as was Constable's admiration of the masters of landscape painting, he remained faithful to his admiration of nature itself. "It seems to me," he said, "that certain critics extol painting in a ridiculous manner. They place it on such a pedestal that we might be inclined to think that nature must acknowledge itself vanquished and ask the artists for lessons. Let us by all means applaud the masterpieces of art, but let us remain faithful to our admiration of nature, which alone is the source of art."

In 1837, he was found dead in bed. Although it pained him to know that he was not appreciated as he ought to have been by the

public, he understood why he was not popular. "My art," he said, "does not flatter anyone; it does not aim at taking anyone in by its detailed imitation, it does not appeal to people by its softness, it does not astonish anyone by the charm of its finish. I shall never, in fact be the painter for gentlemen and ladies." Time, however, avenged the artist for the scant appreciation of his contemporaries, as the prices obtained for his works since his death prove.

In Constable, England lost one of her greatest painters. He was also the veritable reviver of modern landscape painting. Perhaps he was not exactly an imitator of the French school, for it may be, as we so

John Constable,
Dedham Lock and Mill, c.1818.
Oil on canvas, 70 x 91 cm.
Private collection.





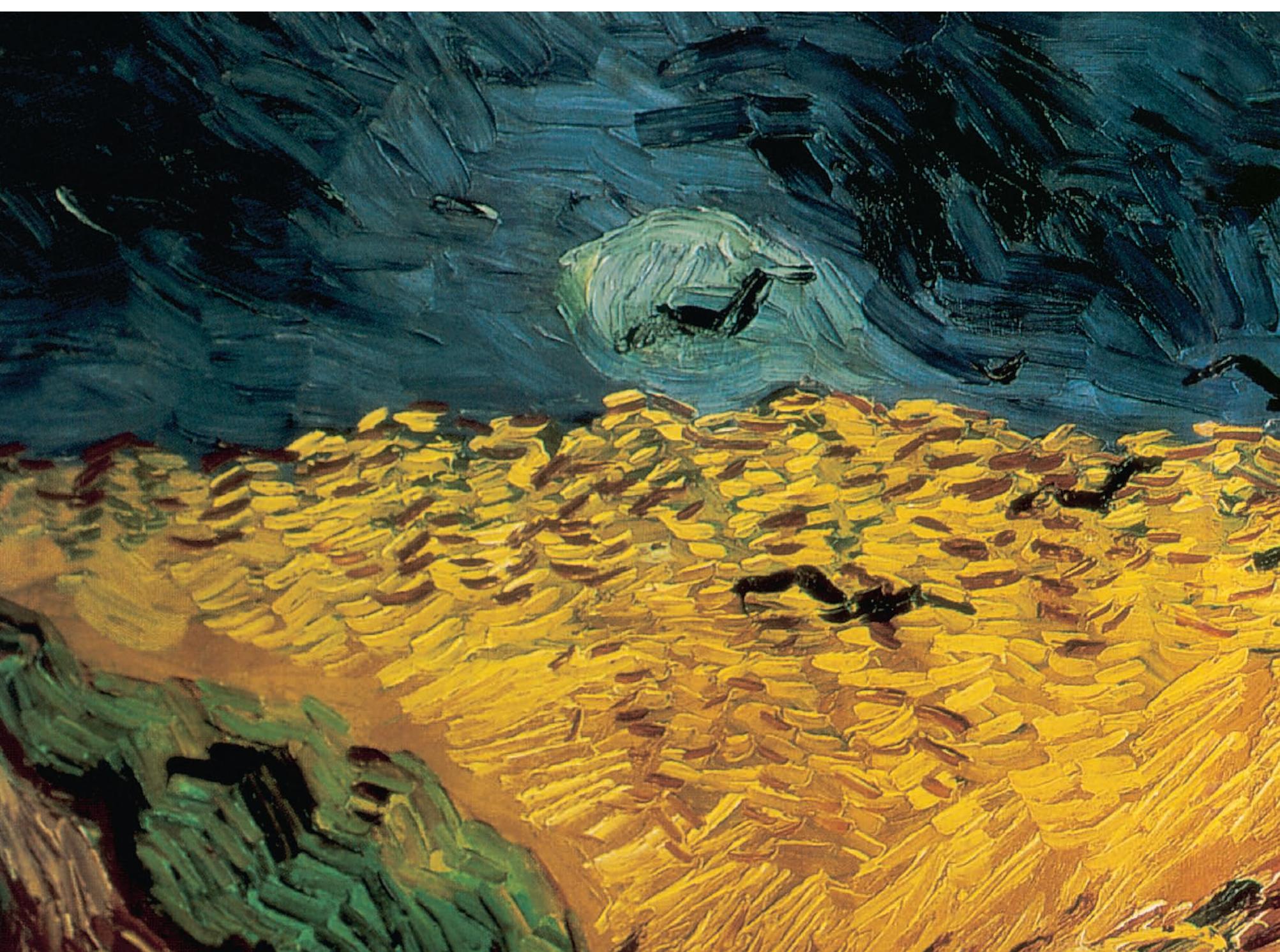
often see in the history of art, that the same current of ideas was just then to be followed on each side of the Channel. It is impossible to attribute the honour of priority to one or to the other, or to say exactly what influence the one had over the other. When Constable sent those pictures which made such a sensation at the French Salon of 1824, several of the French artists had already gone back to that direct study of nature for which his pictures are noted. The favour with which Constable's paintings were received is a proof of this.

Constable never claimed to be a reformer, but the excellence of his methods could not fail to bear fruit. Turner's example, authorising

everything fantastical and adventurous, even when not picturesque, set the fashion of the most daring experiments in execution and method, instead of an attentive study of nature. Constable's work, on the contrary, was based on the study of nature. Instead of travelling the world over in search of subjects that were unknown, it was his own country which fascinated and inspired him, and he preferred the simple little village in which his peaceful and laborious life had been spent. Returning, as he constantly did, to those familiar spots, he depicted for us the endless subjects that he found there and never thought it possible to exhaust their picturesque resources. Nature always had some fresh beauty to reveal. As he always intended, from the very beginning of his career, he became the acknowledged painter of his own district. Himself revelling in the enjoyment which such close communion with nature gave him, he makes us admire the poetry of it in his works. Over and above this, and quite unintentionally on his part, he created afresh that kind of homely landscape painting which the Dutch, and more particularly J. van Ruisdael, had discovered before him. After him, through the same persevering and disinterested researches, our modern school of landscape painting was to bring this once more into vogue.

John Constable,
The Lock, 1824.
Oil on canvas, 142.2 x 120.7 cm.
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

John Constable,
The Opening of Waterloo Bridge ('Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817'), 1832.
Oil on canvas, 130.8 x 218 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.



Chapter 6

The Masters of Modern Landscape Painting



Landscape Painting



Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot was born in Paris on the 26th of July, 1796. Nothing in his surroundings seemed to point towards his future career. At the age of eleven, Corot entered Lycée Pierre Corneille in Rouen. He stayed there until 1812 and never obtained a prize in any subject, not even for drawing. He acquired a very individual sense of ancient poetry and of mythology which he showed later in his pictures. More profitable still, perhaps, were his walks with a friend of his family along the banks of the Seine in the neighbourhood of Rouen. The picturesque beauty of all he saw then made a deep impression on him. On his return to Paris, his father placed him in the service of a cloth merchant. In spite of his absolute disinclination for commerce, out of respect for his father, Corot continued trying to accustom himself to it for eight years. That his true vocation was painting became more and more marked after making the acquaintance of Achille-Etna Michallon, a young artist who had won the grand prix for landscape, and who returned to Paris after his sojourn in Rome.

The academic paintings by Achille-Etna Michallon (1795-1822) do not give one a very high idea of his talent. But when Michallon painted from nature, he was remarkably sincere, and the studies he made in Italy show his conscientiousness, his sureness of touch, and the truthfulness of his colouring. The values are given with scrupulous care and, by calling the attention of his young friend to this point, Michallon must certainly have exercised a very good influence over him.

Corot, no doubt, used to accompany Michallon when the latter went out to work from nature. Seated near him, he took advantage of his advice, and this friendship made him all the more anxious to devote himself entirely to painting. He was at this time with another employer, who interceded with his father for him. He was greatly prejudiced against the career which the young artist wished to adopt, however he eventually relented. Corot's needs were few, and he enjoyed his independence and the idea that he was free to devote himself entirely to his art.

Michallon talked to Corot enthusiastically about his art; he urged on Corot the necessity of studying nature with absolute sincerity and of only depicting its most striking aspects. Corot gave himself up entirely to his studies, forgetful of time. On returning home after sunset at the end of his day's work, he would often go to a baker's and buy a lump of bread for his evening meal, so anxious to make his modest income hold out. On rainy days, Corot would copy Michallon's simplest studies very conscientiously. He was grateful to this artist for treating him as a comrade, as Michallon had already made a name for himself. It was a great grief to Corot when his friend died in 1822.



Vincent van Gogh,
Wheatfield with Crows (detail), 1890.
Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 103 cm.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.
(p. 200-201)

Camille Corot,
The Colosseum: View from the Farnese Gardens, 1826.
Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 30 x 49 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Camille Corot,
The Colosseum seen through the Arcades of the Basilica of Constantine, 1825.
Oil on canvas, 23 x 35 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



He now felt the need of further instruction and entered the studio of Jean-Victor Bertin (1767-1842), whom he probably knew through Michallon. Bertin was a faithful disciple of Valenciennes and at that time one of the most qualified painters of historical landscape of the most conventional kind. He merely saw in nature suitable scenery for framing mythological episodes. His determination to go to Italy to complete his education was a wise one and more likely to be more profitable to Corot than Bertin's lessons alone. The two years spent there, 1825 to 1827, exercised a decisive influence over Corot. In Rome itself and in the surrounding country, he found the most varied subjects. Instead of making sketches, he went to the trouble of drawing his studies in the most conscientious manner possible. There is subordination of detail to the whole, exactness of proportion, and unity of aspect, even in the most complex views.

Achille-Etna Michallon,
View of the Colosseum at Rome.
Oil on canvas, 25 x 40 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Corot, who was somewhat timid at first, did not care to talk about himself and he usually worked apart from the others. He was too shrewd not to be well aware that they all considered him a good sort of fellow of no great importance. An unforeseen circumstance put an end to their bantering, harmless as it was, and Corot, who had hitherto been their victim, took the place due to him on account of his ability.

Théodore Caruelle d'Aligny, crossing the forum one day, saw Corot at work on *View of the Colosseum from Farnese Gardens*. Struck by the remarkable qualities of this study, he not only congratulated the young artist cordially, but that very evening, arriving before him at a restaurant, Aligny told the other artists what he had seen. He spoke of the study in terms of great praise: "This young man who has hitherto been in the shade, bids fair to become our Master some day." Corot, who now arrived on the scene, was greeted on all sides with compliments and congratulations. He was deeply touched by Aligny's action in the matter. From that time forth, he was eternally grateful to him and never lost an opportunity of expressing his gratitude.

The day came when his family insisted on his return to France. Besides the complete change of habits necessary, very many difficulties



awaited him there. He no longer felt at home in Paris, as he did not see how to make a place for himself because it was impossible for him to give up the style he had adopted and the convictions he had formed. The remaining representatives of academic landscape painting had a certain authority which was not warranted at that time. With systematic despotism, they opposed the new doctrines which a group of younger artists, whose ideas had been formed by a close study of nature, finally succeeded in introducing. Corot's sympathies were with this younger school but he was unknown to its adherents and was determined to make his own way without having recourse to anyone. In order to do this he was obliged to make himself known and to earn some money. With this end in view, he sent two pictures to the Salon of 1827. It was the first time he had exhibited there and these two pictures were painted from studies he had brought back from Italy. One was a view of the country around Rome, *View at Narni*, the other being *Bridge of Augustus over the Nera*.

The pictures which Corot exhibited in the 1831 Salon had similar faults, for, as time went on, his memories of Italy lost their vividness. Constant communion with nature was what he needed. He tried to return to that, but, after the beauties which Italy had revealed to him,

it was difficult to accustom himself to the simplicity of the material he now had to study. But he set himself to his new task, and by persistent work began to understand that in the simplest subjects there is much to learn.

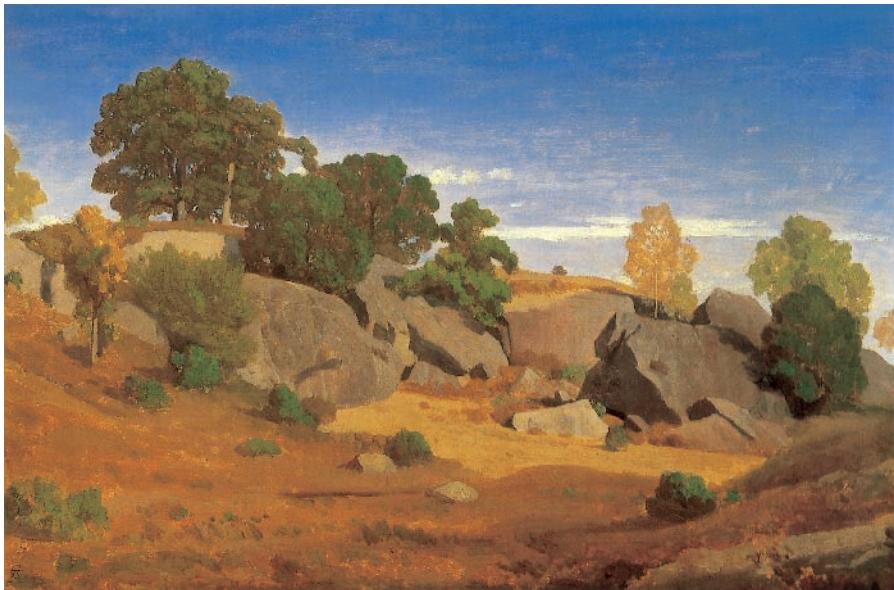
Corot now found something to learn everywhere, even in the most neglected spots. At the same time he was always ready to go in search of more picturesque themes. The beauty of Fontainebleau naturally appealed to him and in 1830, 1833, and 1834, he sent pictures to the Salon of subjects he found there. Corot was struck with the grandeur of the old oaks and realised all that a slow and difficult growth in unsuitable soil meant to them, and how this accounted for the impression they give of struggle and of force. It is with a firmer brush that he marks the contrast of the rich growth and the harsh rocks among which they grow.

Camille Corot,

The Forum Seen from the Farnese Gardens, 1826.

Paper on canvas, 28 x 50 cm.

Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Théodore Caruelle d'Aligny,
Rocks at Fontainebleau (Gorges-aux-Loups et Long-Rocher), c.1842.
Paper on canvas, 33 x 49 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Camille Corot,
Florence. View from the Boboli Gardens, c.1835-1840.
Oil on canvas, 51 x 73 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Remarkable as these pictures are, Fontainebleau was not calculated to inspire Corot with his finest work. Its grandeur was somewhat severe for his taste and he preferred scenery that was gayer, scenery in which all forms appear freer and hazier. He was attracted by Ville-d'Avray, where, in 1817, his father had bought a little country place. Corot found there the same charm that he had found in the old familiar scenery which had appealed to him from his childhood. Near the little pool, which is now dry, he saw the vegetation he knew so well, the silvery willows and the aspen trees shivering with every breeze, the reeds, and the tender green plants of all kinds which cover the uneven slope. The desire to revisit Italy became so imperious that in 1834 he left his family once more for this purpose.

In the very midst of his work in Venice, Corot received a letter from his father asking him to return home. Cost what it might, he could not refuse to obey his father's wishes, and so he went back to Paris. But in this short excursion, he had seen some totally different scenery from that of his first journey, and as he now had more varied material at his disposal, he was able to give free play to his imagination when he endeavoured to revive the somewhat neglected branch of art known as historical landscape.

Living very much apart and having his own ideas, Corot maintained his entire independence and joined neither the academic nor the romantic coteries, which were both attracting great attention at that time. Corot's pictures in the Salons were now being noticed by critics. He was painting landscapes, either from the studies he had made in Italy or from those in the Forest of Fontainebleau, and compositions from sacred subjects or from mythology.

From this time forth, the artist's originality seems to have entirely liberated itself. He no longer treated obscure subjects which could only be understood by learned people. According to Corot, picturesque mythology did not require abstract themes and traditional repetitions; it should be living and the artist should go to nature itself for his inspirations. He liked to interpret the poetry it contained in his own way.

Instead of the set figures with which his predecessors filled in their commonplace works, this great artist's figures belong to the scene and cannot be taken out of it. Their forms carry out the lines of the picture, their clearly cut outlines stand out delicately against the background, and the fresh colour of their naked flesh contrasts with the varied greens of the vegetation and intensify the brilliancy of this scene all the more. These nymphs and goddesses are always charming and are truly the artist's own creations. He spared no trouble in order to give them the grace with which he adorns them, to model them correctly, as it were, with the atmosphere. Numerous studies painted by him from life, either out of doors or in the studio, had familiarised him with

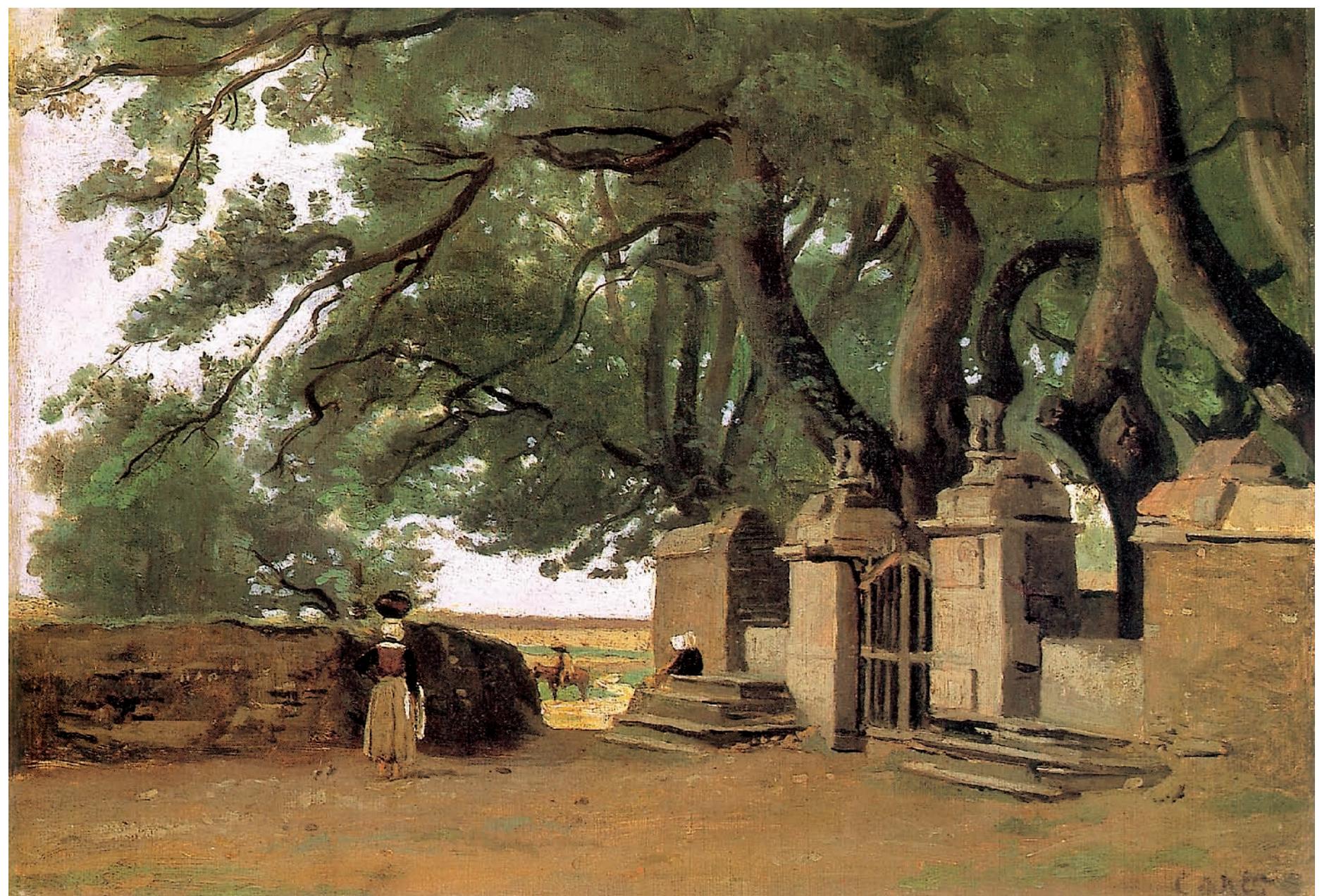




Camille Corot,
The Cascades, Tivoli, 1843.
Oil on canvas, 26 x 41 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Camille Corot,
The Bridge at Narni, 1826.
Oil on canvas, 68 x 94.6 cm.
Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, Ottawa.



the human form. He learnt to choose the most expressive attitudes for his figures and he excelled in putting them in the right place – all this with a sense of appropriateness to his subject. These studies are celebrated and have influenced French historical painting. Enveloped as these figures are with light, and reflected everywhere, they compelled artists to take into account the outdoor element which was new to them, and other artists, following Corot's example, began to realise the picturesque charm thus obtainable.

As Corot read more, he found subjects for his compositions in the Bible, in Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare; but it must be confessed that the more dramatic episodes with which these readings inspired him were not in harmony with his own gentle disposition. The peaceful, gracious side of life as envisaged in olden times appealed to him most, and it required no effort on his part to express its charm.

Greatly as Corot enjoyed treating the fine subjects he obtained from his reading and from his musical impressions, his enjoyment when he found himself with nature was greater still. He was never weary of consulting, studying, and living in close communion with it. During his walks he always carried a notebook for jotting down his observations. Once installed before a subject of his choice, Corot threw himself into his work. He was more than rewarded for the effort of energy that this cost him, as he learnt in this way to see beauty; that is, to be able to find, in what appeared as the most ordinary views, all the poetry that they contained. Reality appeared more beautiful to him than imagination; in it he looked for the familiar sides of things, discovering in their humility all that was general and permanent.

Without imitating Claude, Corot seems to have continued his work with a more refined and modern taste. Like Claude, and even still more than him, Corot required order and rhythm in line and a certain symmetry in arrangement. The air seems to circulate freely everywhere, the light appears through the leaves and it even seems as though they are being stirred by the breeze. He knew when to break masses that were too sombre or too compact by putting in a lighter tree. The outlines are very distinctly indicated in some places and are vague in others, disappearing in the background. With very little cost he thus gives that mixture of vagueness and distinctness, of softness and relief, which is seen in reality. Like nature itself, Corot does not attempt to explain everything, but by the precision and accuracy of his touches, one recognises the artist who uses his knowledge for interpreting his own feelings. Other artists, thinking that all this was very easy, attempted to imitate him. They imagined that they succeeded, in a rough way, in imitating his handling of a picture; they never succeeded in getting his poetry out of it.



Camille Corot,
Breton Landscape. A Gate in the Shade of Large Trees,
c.1840-1850.
Paper on canvas, 32 x 45 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Camille Corot,
Peasant Guarding her Cow at the Edge of a Wood, 1865-1870.
Oil on canvas, 47.5 x 35 cm.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Corot's talent was characterised by great sincerity; at the same time, it was so novel, and so different from all that had been seen hitherto, that those who knew nothing of nature, and who only judged from the interpretations of it which they saw in galleries, were puzzled by such absolute originality. Photography, then opportunely introduced, confirmed his increasing fame and showed how logical his "manner," as it was called, was and on what a solid foundation of truthfulness it was based. The reproductions of his pictures seem to be taken directly from nature. As time went on, mythology disappeared almost entirely from Corot's work. Nature increasingly attracted him and he found such charm in it that it seemed to him enough to depict it alone without the aid of literary reminiscences. Instead of the heroes of fables and the inventions of poets, he contented himself with the persons to be seen everywhere in the country; young girls gathering flowers,

poor people, peasants, woodcutters, fishermen; simply letting his boat glide among the reeds. Districts such as Artois and Picardy, which until then had been thought less picturesque than others, revealed to him their hidden beauty in the simplest subjects.

Corot brings our notice to little unknown spots, which we would otherwise have passed indifferently, and he makes us look at them with his eyes. Every year, at the beginning of spring, he was in a hurry to leave Paris and to go to the fields. After being shut up the whole winter in his studio, he loved to feel himself gradually growing young again by inhaling the fresh, vivifying air. To the venerable artist, these were privileged moments, and one feels, in the more delicate technique of his later studies and in their more exquisite gradations of colour, a sort of emotion mingled with the joy of painting.

Camille Corot,
The Neighborhood of Presles, in Seine-et-Oise, 1845-1850.
Oil on canvas, 21.5 x 32 cm.
Private collection, Paris.

Corot continued tranquilly along his own path, never deviating in any way, and in the end, the originality of his style won the fervent admiration of many of his brother artists. "Corot is a true artist," wrote Delacroix, after paying him a visit in 1847.



One must see a painter in his own home in order to have an idea of his merit. I saw there, and appreciated in quite a different way, pictures that I had already seen in the Salon and which had not then struck me particularly. He told me to go straight ahead always and to take what came in my way. He does this himself generally and he does not believe that one can ever make a picture beautiful merely by taking infinite pains.

Yet Corot never spared himself any trouble. When comparing him with his contemporaries, tormented as they were by continual anxiety and hesitation, it is evident that at an early age he had known what his own aspirations really were. He was very kindly disposed towards young artists and liked giving them advice, based on his own experience. He recommended them first to establish and then work up the form, as that was absolutely essential. Above everything else, he advised them to obey their instinct conscientiously and sincerely, and their own way of seeing, and not to trouble about anything else. These were rules which he had followed himself. They had not approved of his

works and yet, later, these very works had been greatly in demand. "Nature," Corot went on to say,

is never two minutes alike, it changes constantly. All this constitutes its expression and it is just this which one must translate well. One day it is this, another day that, and when once the artist has taken in all its different aspects he must make a whole of it and this whole will be like nature if the artist has seen properly.

These ideas were also shared by John Constable.

Corot's character was in harmony with his talent, and the calmness and serenity which appears in his work characterised his life as well. The respect he had for his own dignity would

Camille Corot,
Recollection of Mortefontaine, 1864.
Oil on canvas, 65 x 89 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Camille Corot,
The Gust of Wind, c.1865-1870.
Oil on canvas, 47.4 x 58.9 cm.
Musée Saint-Denis, Reims.

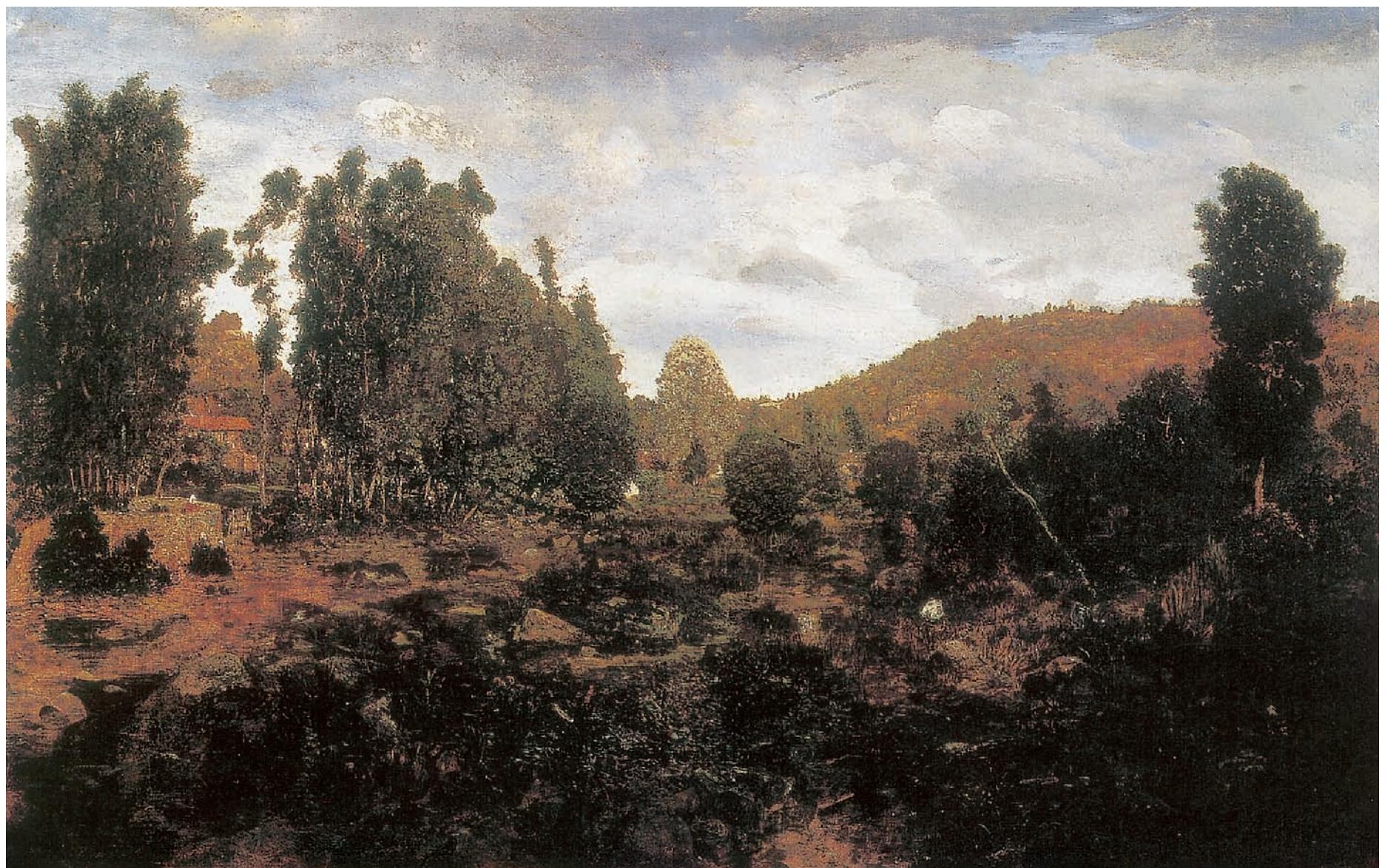
Théodore Rousseau,
Les Marais de Tiffauges en Vendée
(Swamp near Tiffauges in Vendée), 1837-1844.
Oil on canvas, 64.7 x 103 cm.
Private collection.

have always prevented him from skipping attendance on any one for the sake of obtaining honours. He knew his own value and felt sure that his day would come. Even if it should not, he felt that he was repaid for his work by his love of nature and by the enjoyment that this love procured for him. In 1874, Corot lost his sister. This was a great grief to him, and it is about this time that his own health also began to give way. His friends came to see him a great deal and he was very grateful for their devotion, but death was now approaching and he was preparing courageously to meet it. He continued to grow worse, and, at times, when he was feverish and wandering in his mind, his hand would move about as though painting "the wonderful scenery that appeared to him." The day of his death, he refused the food offered to him, saying with a smile, "Pere Corot will lunch up above today." This was the 23rd of February, 1875, and he passed away that very night.

Théodore Rousseau and the Barbizon painters

Pierre Étienne Théodore Rousseau was born in Paris in 1812, sixteen years after Corot, and had quite different ideas in his manner of comprehending and depicting landscape. He was the son of a tailor from Salins-les-Bains in Jura, but his mother came of a family which boasted of its painters and sculptors. After beginning his education, Rousseau was sent to stay with some relatives in the country in Franche-Comté, for the sake of his health. Struck by the beauty around him, he tried to draw some of the scenery of this wild area. On his return to Paris, his father wanted him to enter the École Polytechnique, but the young man could not forget the charm of the country, and had a most ardent desire to become a landscapist. His parents allowed him to follow his inclinations. After spending a season at Compiègne with a painter, a cousin of his mother, Rousseau took his advice and entered the studio of Jean-Charles Joseph Rémond. Rémond was a pupil of Bertin's and one of the most qualified representatives of academic doctrines. Up to the very end of his long career – he died on the 15th of July, 1875, at the age of eighty – he drew his inspirations direct from nature, going either to the South of France, to Italy, or to Switzerland for the subjects of his pictures.

In deference to his master, Rousseau at first obeyed all his instructions, even though they were not in accordance with his own ideas. He soon began to understand that the difference between the two styles open to him was too great, and that he could not work along these double lines. He therefore decided to separate from his master, and, in 1828 and 1829, he took up his abode at Moret on the banks of the Loing, and after that in the Chevreuse Valley.





There he found the most picturesque and varied studies. What he painted during that time showed his evident sincerity. In the winter he returned to Paris and copied at the Louvre, chiefly from Claude Lorrain and Karel Dujardin. The struggle of the romantic school had already commenced around him, and Paul Huet and Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps were taking an active part in the fray. Rousseau, with his gentle, pacific disposition, was not the man for controversy. He lived apart and worked unceasingly, far enough away from the violent discussions. Alone in the great city, he felt more solitary than in the country.

In 1832, he started for Auvergne. The rough wildness of this region, then so little known, tempted him, and he certainly found subjects

Théodore Rousseau,
The Forest of Fontainebleau, Morning, 1850.
Oil on canvas, 98 x 134 cm.
Wallace Collection, London.

there to satisfy his taste. He would stay out working in the open air, with the strong determination to learn. The vicinity of Lake Chambon, the suburbs of Thiers and of that wonderful town of Puy, all fascinated him in turn, and the faithful pictures of these different places which he brought back mark the successive stages of his studies.

On returning to Paris, he went every evening, when his day's work was over, to join a little circle of artists whom he had known for some time. Among them were Decamps, Diaz, and Ary Scheffer.

Reserved as he was, Rousseau always felt ill at ease among the militants of the romantic school. His language was his painting, and it was only in his works that he could express his convictions.

Following the course of the Seine, he went along the river as far as Normandy. The sky was more luminous and more animated, and Rousseau had to make his palette brighter after the sombre tones of the Auvergne scenery. The principal stages of his journey



could be traced from the numerous studies that he brought back with him, and which he kept in his studio until his death. He had a view of Les Andelys and the Seine. He painted the suburbs of Rouen, and then went on as far as the sea to Granville, with its melancholy beach, its rocks, and its tall cliffs.

Delighted with this first campaign, Rousseau returned to Normandy the following year. He went eastward this time and stayed at Mont St. Michel, and the wild beauty of that islet, rising up in the middle of the strand, as well as the majesty of the buildings tiering up on its slopes, made a deep impression on him. Rousseau endeavoured to make his studies more complete. His handling, which had hitherto been somewhat harsh, became easier, and he learnt how to choose his subjects better and how to keep the special characteristics of each. Until then the decorative side of art had always held a significant place in his works. He had chiefly painted picturesque views and panoramas, in which the trees played a secondary part and only appeared in a mass in the

background. As time went on, he grew to love trees more and more, until it became his ambition to express their beauty better and to make them the principal subject of his pictures. In order to study them more thoroughly, he took up his abode in the heart of the forest of Compiègne. Besides its thickets of oaks and beeches, the forest had its pools, its villages hidden away in its depths, and the ruins. The idea came to him to return to Fontainebleau, which he had scarcely seen since his first visit to Moret. He went to it from another side and found food and lodging with Mère Lemoine at Chailly-Bière for two francs a day. Autumn was just then displaying the splendours of its colouring in the great forest. For days he wandered about, exploring it in all directions, losing himself frequently and staying out of doors until nightfall.

Théodore Rousseau,
The Edge of the Forest at Fontainebleau, Setting Sun, 1850-1851.
Oil on canvas, 142 x 198 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Landscape Painting



Rousseau's resources came to an end before he settled down seriously to work, and when winter came he was obliged to return to Paris and endeavour to earn more money. From his wretched attic he had a view of the horizon, bounded by the roofs and chimneys of the great city. "Seated on the sill of his narrow window with his feet hanging over space," by bending down he could see, through a chink, part of a house belonging to one of the Rothschilds, and a small poplar tree stretching its bare arms towards the sky in its eagerness for air and light. This tree was all that he could see of nature. At times the young man would feel the need of refreshing himself by communing with nature, and he would then go away to the country. On his return he had to go back to his thankless work to earn enough for his wretched existence.

Rousseau was anxious to return to Jura; the fascination of the mountains kept him there for four months. He stayed at a little inn situated on the Col de la Faucille, at an altitude of about 1,219.2 metres. This time, instead of doing chance studies without any object in view, he decided to sum up, in a few carefully prepared pictures, the chief characteristics of that part of the country, and to give on his canvas an idea of the immensity with which he was surrounded. He was, therefore, always on the lookout for moments when this nature, grand as it was, appeared still grander. On returning to Paris, he took with him about twenty studies that he had made along the Alpine chain. It was also through Ary Scheffer that the Duke of Orleans bought Rousseau's *The Forest at Fontainbleau, Morning*, a simple subject well painted, in February of 1834.

Instead of injuring him, his systematic exclusion by the artistic establishment won for him a good deal of sympathy. He was greatly appreciated by some of the most celebrated of his brother artists, and one day Delacroix took George Sand to his studio to see his work. He was once more attracted by the Forest of Fontainebleau and took up his abode at Barbizon, where he spent the winter of 1836-1837. Fascinated by the wild beauty of that time of the year, he sketched and painted outdoors in all kinds of weather.

After the death of his mother, Rousseau yielded to the entreaties of one of his great admirers, Charles Le Roux, and went to stay with him for a time in La Vendée. Le Roux showed his guest the most picturesque spots. Rousseau troubled about nothing but his art. He also painted a picture which was rather larger than others, his famous *The Chestnut Avenue*. This represents an

Théodore Rousseau,
An Avenue, Forest of L'Isle-Adam, 1849.
Oil on canvas, 101 x 82 cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

avenue with the tops of the old trees joining each other here and there, thus forming an almost impenetrable green vault. The very simplicity of the subject obliged Rousseau to treat it with absolute conscientiousness. According to his custom he proceeded by first choosing his place carefully. He then drew a very exact sketch on the canvas itself and painted it in monochrome, thus lightening the difficulties of his task by establishing at once the setting of his picture and the position of the chief masses. He could thus determine the precise moment for the effect and also the values of the various details of his work. By the persistency with which he worked on this picture, he somewhat hardened it eventually, but the powerful effect nevertheless remained, and the very novelty of his experiments is a proof of his conscientiousness. There was nothing aggressive about his painting; it was always sober and truthful, it attracted attention and ought to have won for him the appreciation which it merited. The picture was sent to the Salon and refused. The injustice of this severity was pointed out and there was protest on all sides. An enlightened amateur, M. Paul Perrier, bought it for £80. The blunt refusal had thus served to render the picture famous and to mark a turning point in Rousseau's career.

It was whilst staying at La Vendée, near the Sevre, that he made the studies for another of his more celebrated pictures, *The Valley of Tiffauges*. The little river occupies the whole of the foreground of the canvas. The shallow, transparent water reveals the long grasses floating about in its bed, like green hair, with the movement of the current. On each bank of the river are poplars, willows, and slender ash trees, and in the centre of the picture a wooded hill. The water flowing along in the midst of luxuriant vegetation and mossy rocks is a marvel of execution. Rousseau has succeeded in giving its real colour, the reflections of the trees and sky, together with the plants swaying on the surface and those plunged in its depths.

Such studies were too new and the public was too unprepared for them to be able to appreciate Rousseau's art. A love so deeply rooted in nature was considered revolutionary. The indifference of the public and his perpetual state of poverty induced him, at times, to attempt a return to historical painting. But when once he was in the presence of nature his confidence always returned and he then continued his usual work. As soon as he returned to Paris he went to see Jules Dupré. They both had a fit of misanthropy just then, and, weary of city life, they decided to go to the Landes, which had been described to them as a truly wild region.

Loving nature as he did profoundly, and admiring it in its every detail, Rousseau wanted to express all its beauty in each one of his works. He was never satisfied with his studies and he never considered them finished. Urged on by the idea of doing better, he destroyed what he



Jean-François Millet,
The Angelus, 1857-1859.
Oil on canvas, 55.5 x 66 cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Théodore Rousseau,
Pond at the Edge of a Wood, 1860-1865.
Oil on wood, 61 x 81 cm.
Musée de peinture et de sculpture, Grenoble.

had done, and, in some cases, could not reacquire the qualities with which he had been dissatisfied. By labouring thus at his work he would destroy its freshness and then, having tired out himself, he was quite incapable of judging it. In spite of his energy of character, he thus lost faith in himself and gave way to his fits of discouragement.

Dupré advised Rousseau to stop in time, to resign himself to certain imperfections which were sometimes signs of superior merit, and Rousseau realised the value of this friendly candour. Wishing to continue his outdoor study, and not wanting to leave Dupré, he went with him to Montsoult in 1845. They were quite near the forest of l'Isle-Adam and Rousseau found agreeable scenery with trees hanging over the river Oise, or growing in the beautiful valleys there.

On returning to Paris, Rousseau did not want to be far away from his friend who lived in Avenue Frochot, and he therefore took up his abode in the Place Pigalle. Keeping studiously away from the whirl and movement of social life, he continued working, quite aloof from all the intrigues and agitations of the various coteries. In 1846, he went to Berry where he visited George Sand. He was then attracted once more by the Forest of Fontainebleau. The feverish curiosity to which he had so often yielded was now satisfied and he felt an ardent desire to retire to some place that he liked and devote himself to the study of it.

The Forest of Fontainebleau had been comparatively respected. It was now to offer him those incomparable resources for study which make it such an immense domain for landscapists. Aligny and Bertin, Corot, and after him, Paul Huet and Decamps, had made a few studies there, but Rousseau decided to settle down and live in the forest. In 1847 he rented a little cottage from a peasant at Barbizon and converted a barn into a studio with very little expense. A life of work and of enjoyment now began for him. The great forest belonged to him; at every time of the year, at every hour of the day, he could choose his subjects at will and find out what sky, what light and what effect harmonised best with their characteristics.

He had a genuine adoration for the old trees and never wearied of drawing them. Any injury done to them seemed like a personal offence to him, and he consigned to the infernal regions all the forest keepers who marked old oak trees for destruction. According to his idea, all the elements of a landscape ought to be closely bound up in each other and form a complete, homogeneous whole. To anyone capable of seeing and observing, every tree tells its story; it is such as it has been made by the ground in which it has grown, the shelter it has had and the weather to which it has been exposed.



Landscape Painting



The Revolution of 1848, and the modifications it brought about in the constitution of the Jury for the Salon, gave Rousseau an opportunity of manifesting his ability. All the pictures he sent to the Salon of 1849 were accepted. Although Rousseau was not yet understood by the general public, his works were greatly appreciated by artists and he was acclaimed as the chief of the French school of landscapists. He had been led to believe that the decoration of the Legion of Honour would be the official recognition of his talent, but on the day of the distribution of awards, Dupré alone was decorated. As soon as he was once away from Paris and back at work in the great forest, Rousseau forgot his wounded pride.

Jean-François Millet (1814-1875) had taken up his abode at Barbizon in 1849, with his wife and family. He had known poverty at an early age, and it was to be his companion to the very close of his existence. Obliged, as he had been, to accept any kind of work in order to earn money for his family, he had hesitated for a long time about the style which he really ought to adopt as his own speciality. He had painted portraits, mythological pictures and pastoral subjects after the manner of François Boucher. But he was dissatisfied with such work, for it was not remunerative and it did not appeal to his taste. He felt more and more inclined to paint rustic scenes, such as had been familiar to him from his childhood in the little village of Gruchy in Manche. He had lived there among peasants and seafaring men, who, owing to the unfertile ground of the moorland or the sullen sea with which they had to contend, knew the difficulties of earning a living. His parents were not without a certain culture, and the memory of them and of their example must have consoled Millet in the terrible struggle for existence which only ended with his life.

Millet was the younger by about two years, but they had enough affinity to attract, and enough diversity to find, each other interesting. It was therefore greatly to Rousseau's advantage to be with Millet, who had a more cultivated and thoughtful mind, and who was interested in so many subjects. Both had the same ideal with regard to truthfulness in their art and both were equally devoted to nature. As they worked along different lines, they could act as critic and public to each other. Millet liked to express man's struggle with nature, whilst Rousseau depicted the struggle of the tree with the ground in which it grows.

They did not take advantage at once of the opportunity they had for such interaction. They were both proud, and they had to conquer the reserve caused by their poverty and by the knowledge of their own individual merit. Gradually their straightforwardness and the simplicity of their daily life led to that loyal affection which continued between them as long as they lived. Rousseau was the



Théodore Rousseau,
The Puddle, 1842-1843.
Oil on canvas, 41.5 x 63.4 cm.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims.

Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Peña,
Approaching Storm, 1871.
Oil on panel, 21 x 30 cm.
The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

first to meet with success, whereupon, in the most delicate manner, he rendered assistance to his friend.

Rousseau's talent was, at this time, in full maturity. When initiating Millet into the knowledge of the forest, he increased his own admiration for its beauties. As he became more conscious of them, he began to make his works a great poem in honour of nature. Some of his best pictures date from this time, but we will only mention the more typical of them. In *Oak Trees Near Apremont*, Rousseau gives us these great trees standing alone like giants in the midst of the plain bounded by the Apremont hills. It is summer and from the height of the dappled sky the sun is shooting down its rays and the strong, short shadows of the trees are clearly defined. Rain has fallen during the previous night and there are still puddles of water on the grass, whose fresh verdure contrasts with the sombre foliage of the oaks. It was just this contrast of the different greens, and of the brilliant light and intensity of the shadows, which delighted him, and which he has expressed with such singular accuracy and force.

His picture *Edge of the Forest at Fontainbleau, Setting Sun*, was exhibited in the Salon of 1851. The artist here uses two different decorative arrangements in order to express the calmness of the forest and that of the country towards the close of day. Grouped together at the border of the wood, a few trunks of old oaks and beeches stand out vigorously against a golden sky, whose clouds are tinged with purple by the setting sun. Under the vault formed by the interlaced branches of the trees is an immense plain with a few bushes scattered here and there. The dewy mist is blurring, and gradually covering, the outlines of the scanty brushwood. This picture, both as regards construction and its magnificent style, is considered one of the great artist's masterpieces.

The first idea of these underwoods, until then neglected by landscapists, was suggested to Rousseau by nature itself. By showing us the imposing proportions of these trees, whose full height cannot be taken in at a glance, we see something of the hidden life of the forest. As a rule the wildness of the forest, and the struggle of the vegetation with the bareness and poverty of the soil, appealed most to Rousseau and attracted him to the more lonely spots. He was never weary of insisting on those aspects of wildness and force which made such an impression on him, as did his favourite tree, the Oak. He loved its wilful growth, its vigorous branches and its fantastic outlines. Among the more common forms of vegetation in the forest he always preferred the more thorny and prickly.

In his conversation and letters, Rousseau often spoke of that idea of force that he wanted to express, and of the solemn calm that is necessary for the laborious life of the artist. It seems as though he

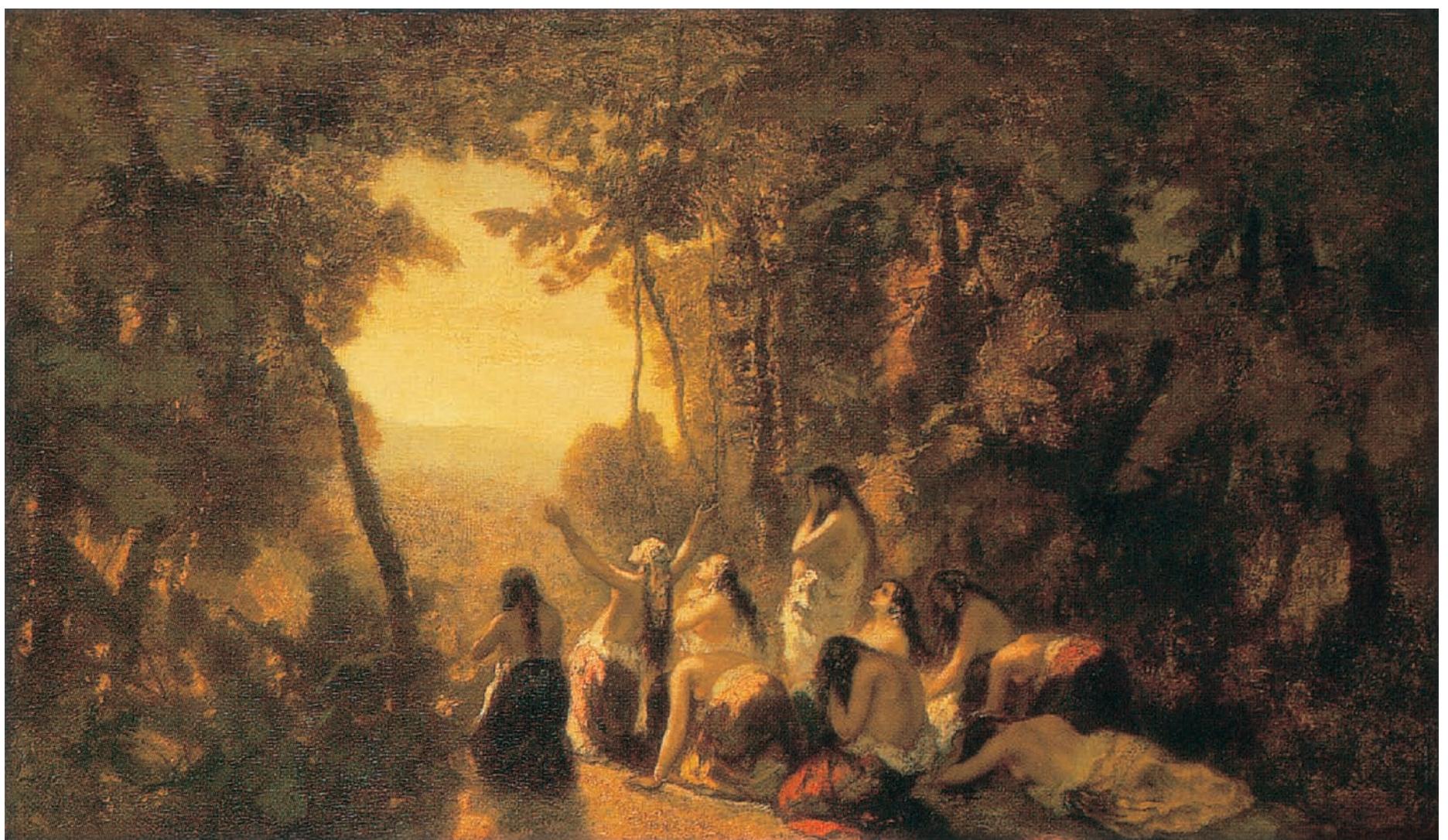
might be referring to himself when he says in one of his letters to a friend: "The soul of an artist must have taken its fill of the infiniteness of nature for us to be able to profit by his representations of any particular type that appeals now to our civilisation." Millet agreed with Rousseau entirely in his ideas on this subject. What he loved in the forest above and beyond everything else was its "calm and its terrible grandeur." Despising the commonplace eloquence of so many of the painters in vogue, he said, "Art is a language which should only be made use of when one has something to say." In his pictures there should be "an indispensable and obligatory bond between them." "I think," he said, "that it is almost better not to say things at all than to say them weakly." In his works, as well as in those of his friend, it is the characteristic of force that prevails and gives to his figures that sculptural precision which engraves them on our mind.

Rousseau grew more and more interested in Millet's works, in that art inspired by ideals so akin to his own. As a rule the landscape was introduced sparingly, for Millet made it serve as an expressive commentary upon the rural episodes whose significance it strongly emphasised. One always sees, in his pictures, the close, indestructible bond between the rustic labourer and Mother Earth. Occasionally Millet allowed nature a larger place in his pictures and he even attempted pure landscape; but he was not strong in depicting the gay side of nature.

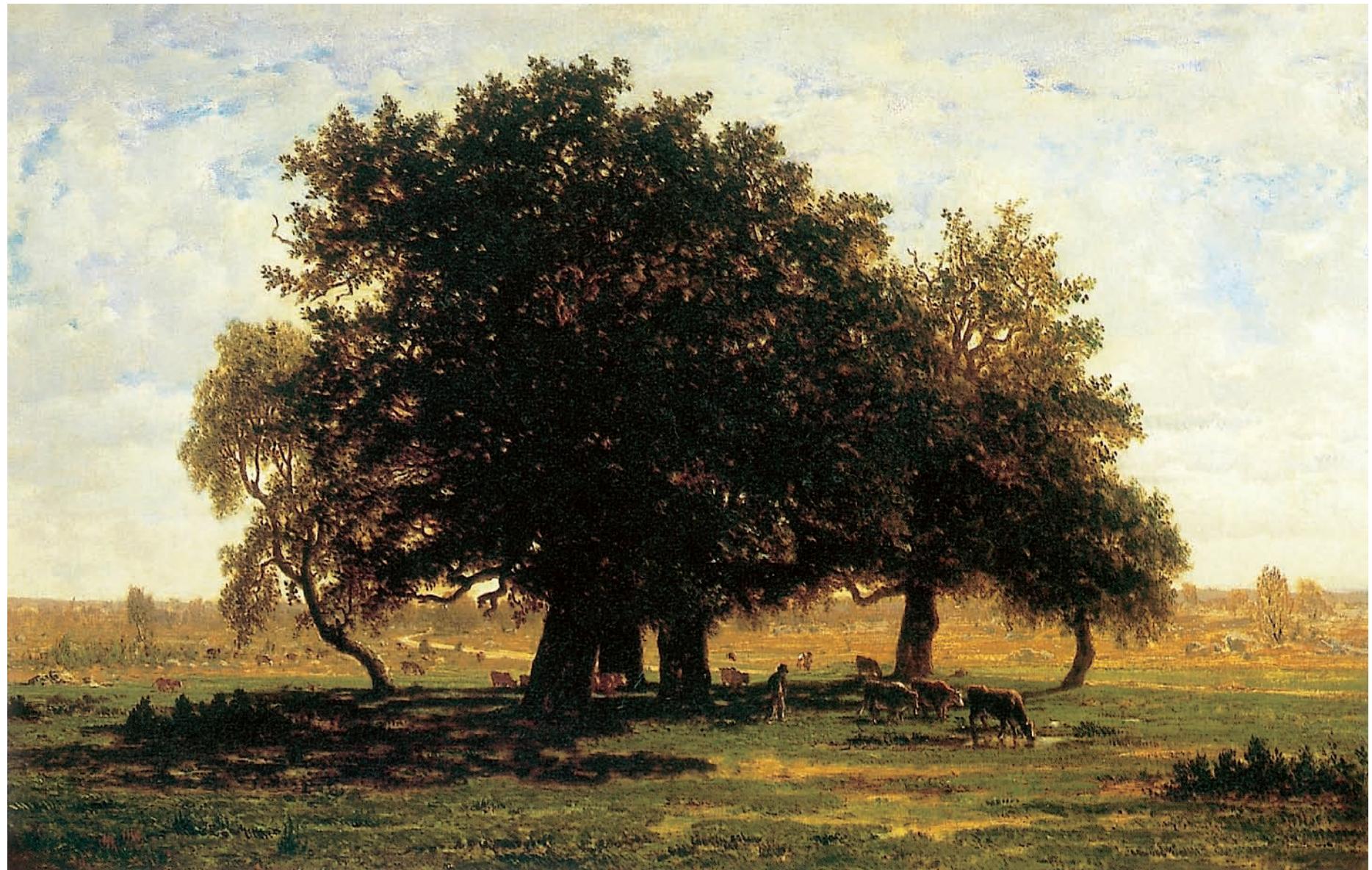
Rousseau and Millet had a similar taste in the choice of subjects and in their execution they aimed at force rather than grace. Their friendship increased until finally they became reliant on each other. Attracted by their ever-increasing fame, a little colony of artists grouped themselves around Rousseau and Millet at Barbizon.

Narcisse Virgilio Diaz, somewhat older than they (1807-1876), was the first of the group of painters admitted to the intimacy of Rousseau and Millet. His forest scenes, and even his sandy deserts, are much more likely to preserve his name than his oriental paintings and those weak allegorical figures – insignificant imitations of Correggio and of Pierre-Paul Prud'hon – of which he painted only too many. Diaz found his right line of work at Barbizon, and after each visit there he returned to Paris with a harvest of studies and pictures. When his brother artists congratulated him, he always gave the credit of his success to Rousseau's instruction, and was never weary of praising the latter's work.

Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Peña,
Lament of Jephthah's Daughter, 1846.
Oil on panel, 37.5 x 59.5 cm.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Landscape Painting



At the Universal Exhibition of 1855 his name was made. The whole collection of thirteen landscape paintings gave an excellent idea of the power and variety of the artist's productions. Amateurs and picture dealers came forward, and, after his former poverty, he was soon comparatively well-to-do. Rousseau now allowed himself the luxury of arranging his little home at Barbizon in accordance with his own tastes, and he now began to fill it with objects that delighted him, among others a pen and sepia study by Rembrandt and a painting by Van Goyen. Explaining the merits of this canvas to one of his pupils, he said, "It has no need of colour for giving an idea of space." He therefore advised his pupil to proceed with the masses and to respect the values thoroughly, in order to preserve unity of impression.

What gives perfection to a picture is not the quantity of detail, but the correctness of the whole. In no matter what subject there is a principle object, on which the eye rests. The principal object ought specially to strike the person who looks at the picture. If, on the other hand, the picture should be executed with affected finish from one end of the canvas to the other, the spectator will look at it with indifference. If everything is to interest him, nothing will interest him.

Ever striving at the best, and wishing the execution to be as perfect as possible, he did not know, any more than he had formerly known, where to stop. He endeavoured to guard against this inveterate inclination of his, and, invoking the authority of Rembrandt and of Claude Lorrain, always came back to that great principle of unity that was affirmed, in one way or another, by all the Great Masters.

In 1866, Rousseau was elected member of the jury for the Salon, and the following year, owing to his increasing fame, the Government invited him to be on the jury of the Universal Exhibition while his colleagues appointed him to the presidency of this jury. In spite of the seventeen pictures of his own that he was exhibiting, his promotion as Officer of the Legion of Honour did not take place until some time after the Exhibition. He was deeply hurt at this delay; this incomprehensible omission was not rectified until August 7th, 1867.

In his early days he had contracted rheumatism through his outdoor painting in the wet and cold, and he was just as imprudent as he grew older. After his visit to the Faucille Pass in 1863, he returned to Barbizon very much changed and very weak. The fatigue and the worries attendant on the Exhibition of 1867 tried him very much, and on returning home in August he had a slight stroke of paralysis. Millet took him to Paris so that he might have the medical care he needed, but as Rousseau could not resign himself to being away from Barbizon he was taken back there. On the 24th of September, he went for his



Théodore Rousseau,
Group of Oaks at Apremont in the Forest of Fontainebleau, c.1855.
Oil on canvas, 64 x 100 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.
(p. 226)

Jules Dupré,
Autumn Landscape, 1840-1850.
Oil on canvas, 51 x 46 cm.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Jules Dupré,
Sunset after a Storm, 1851.
Oil on wood, 47 x 56.5 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Jules Dupré,
Bouquet of Oaks, Sky with White Clouds, c.1860-1865.
Oil on wood, 23 x 27 cm.
Private collection.



last drive, and was very much moved on seeing his beloved old oak trees. "I have been drawing those trees for the last thirty years," he said; "I have their portraits in my portfolios." Two days later he had two more strokes, one after the other, and all hope of recovery was lost. Until the end he never ceased talking of his "beloved forest." He passed away on the 22nd of December, in the presence of Millet. Rousseau was buried in the little cemetery at Chailly, and, seven years later, in 1875, Millet joined him there. Numerous studies were written of these two artists, whose names are inseparable and whose fame has continued to increase. As though history were trying to make some compensation for the hardness and severity of his life, Millet is now, perhaps, better known than Rousseau.

As Rousseau never dated his pictures, and as in many cases he retouched them at different times, it is almost impossible to establish their exact chronology. By his ardent desire for perfection, which led him to think that they were never finished, his works, although of such unequal value, command our respect. But in spite of his great

Charles-François Daubigny,
On the Banks of the Oise, c.1860-1865.
Oil on canvas, 32.5 x 60 cm.
Private collection.

Gustave Courbet,
The Hunted Roe Deer on the Alert, Spring, 1867.
Oil on canvas, 111 x 85 cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

qualities, his style reveals too much effort, too great a tension of will, and the never-ending anxiety of the man whom Paul Mantz very aptly calls "the tormented artist." In his works there is a vague suggestion of oil mingled with the sweet scents of nature, which detracts both from the charm and the vivacity of the impression.

The Schism of 1820

Landscapists born prior to 1820

Although in the new paths opened out to landscape painting the difference of orientation between great artists like Corot and Rousseau was very marked, they were alike in their truthfulness. They cast aside the conventional formulas, making nature from thenceforth their sole inspirer, and the infinite variety of its aspects suffices to explain the diversity of the interpretations they have given us.

Prosper Marilhat (1811-1847), was one of the first of the artists of the new school, and as such his name ought to be remembered. He aimed at style and he had a great love of nature. He was born in 1811, at Vertaizon, in the very heart of Auvergne, amid the wild and picturesque character of this country. His parents were very unwilling for their son to devote himself to painting. When his studies were finished he nevertheless obtained permission to go to Paris and to enter Camille Roqueplan's studio. It was here that he





met Baron von Hugel, a wealthy German, who offered to take Marilhat with him to the East. The peaceful horizon of the Parisian suburbs did not appeal to him after the wild scenery of his native place. He therefore accepted this invitation eagerly and started from Marseilles in 1831. Egypt had won his heart by the simplicity and the purity of its lines, by the wonderful harmony of its colours and the beauty of its light, as well as by the perfect accordance of the human type there with the scenery. When the money sent him by his family was late in arriving he painted portraits or stage scenery for the Alexandria theatre, and when at last he was requested by his parents to return home, he left Egypt reluctantly.

On arriving in France, he painted various pictures from his studies and exhibited them in the Salons. He endeavoured to express the vivid impression of light and space which he had received in the countries he had visited. In his *On the Banks of the Nile*, Marilhat was the first artist to depict, with as much force as delicacy, the contrast between

Charles-François Daubigny,
Riverbank, 1866.
Oil on wood, 26.5 x 46 cm.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

the rich vegetation which covers the river banks in these districts and the desolation of their rocky solitudes. These expressive pictures give a very good idea of the grandeur and poetry of nature in the East. But the young artist's health suffered through the imprudence committed in his adventurous life. He was as passionately fond of pleasure as of work, and it was with terror that he felt the first approaches of the disease which eventually proved fatal to him. On his return to Paris it was soon necessary for him to be placed in a mental asylum, where he died in 1847, at the age of thirty-six.

Jules Dupré, who was born at Nantes in 1811, was one of the pioneers of the modern French school of landscape painting. He commenced his career by working in the porcelain manufactory which his father was managing at Parmain, within view of L'Isle-Adam. But he learnt most by working from nature. At the Salon of 1831, when he was only twenty years of age, he exhibited pictures whose subjects were taken from the suburbs of L'Isle-Adam.

We have already spoken of the friendship which had existed between Dupré and Rousseau. This friendship no doubt exercised a happy influence over Rousseau's artistic development, but Dupré's



resolution of keeping aloof from the Salons was most regrettable. He lived the greater part of the year at L'Isle-Adam and spent the summer at Cayeux-sur-Mer. His first works had been greatly appreciated on account of their excellent drawing and good taste, but in striving after force and brilliancy, Dupré gradually acquired that habit of exaggeration which has been the ruin of so many artists. The uniformity of this heavy and somewhat rough handling ended in a kind of monotony wherein all the delicacies of form and tone, which were the charm of his first landscape, gradually disappeared. But even in his faults we recognise the true artist, anxious always to put more breadth, light and unity into the synthesis of nature which he presents. Like Rousseau, Dupré was an experimenter, always somewhat restless, but devoted to his art and an ardent admirer of the Masters. When he died in 1889, he was buried at L'Isle-Adam, the place that he had scarcely left since his childhood.

The works of Charles-François Daubigny, which too long remained unnoticed, have come to be appreciated much more in the artistic community, and their exquisite truthfulness and extremely individual sentiment certainly entitle them to a position in the first rank. Daubigny, who was born in Paris in 1817, was not one of the pioneers, but he

deserves a place of honour in the French school for his originality. He belonged to a family of artists. His uncle, Pierre Daubigny (1793-1858), was a miniaturist, while his father was a landscapist and a pupil of Victor Bertin. C. Daubigny was very delicate as a child and was put out to nurse at Valmondois, where he remained several years. He scarcely went to school at all, so that his education was by no means a thorough one. He did not trouble about the matter himself, as he did not see any necessity for further studies.

As Daubigny's parents were poor, he had to turn his aptitude for drawing to account at an early age, and at fifteen he painted landscapes on little boxes ordered by clockmakers. After his mother's death, the young man left home. It was with difficulty that he earned enough money to get by, and he considered himself very fortunate when he obtained orders for designing the headings of invoices, and views of houses and estates to be sold. He made up his mind to divide his life into two parts: the one to be devoted to making his

Charles-François Daubigny,
The Banks of the Oise, c.1864.
Oil on panel, 26 x 46 cm.
The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

Landscape Painting



living, and the other to his artistic education. According to the ideas of the times, he imagined that a visit to Italy was necessary for the formation of a painter. He confided to one of his friends his desire to go to Rome and, as the friend was also anxious to go there, they began to economise their money and to put it away in a hiding place. At the end of a year they had fifty-six pounds. The life they led can be imagined, considering that they made this amount hold out for eleven months and that they visited Florence, Rome, and Naples. Daubigny made the best of his time, but his artistic education was not sufficiently advanced for this journey to exercise any influence over the development of his talent.

Once the purse was empty it was necessary to return to Paris and make his way by means of hard work. Daubigny was given an appointment to help in the restoration of the pictures in the Louvre. For a time he thought of competing for the Prix de Rome and, with this idea, he went to Paul Delaroche's studio, having been told that this artist could best help him in preparing for it. However, he soon discovered that the work was not in accordance with his tastes, and he once more took up his studies in the suburbs of Paris, in Orsay and along the banks of the Oise. He then went to Auvers, to L'Isle-Adam and to Valmondois. Between his travels he visited the Louvre, where he admired the Dutch Masters, particularly Van Goyen and J. van Ruisdael. He also paid his tribute to Romanticism and endeavoured to earn a little money with illustrations of Notre Dame de Paris. Not satisfied with the reproductions of some of his drawings, he began to do etchings. When working at these etchings he saw the necessity of being still more exact about form in his studies. The first pictures he exhibited were in the Salon of 1840, and from them he saw how necessary it was to be more accurate.

Daubigny was more at ease with simple scenery, as this was more in harmony with his own temperament. Living in close communion with nature and finding interest enough in that for the works it inspired, simplicity now appealed more and more to him. The banks of the Seine and the Oise, the Morvan Mountains and Picardy supplied him with strikingly different regions, whose characteristics he conscientiously respected. As time went on he gained a more complete knowledge of the resources of his art, and was able to express the significant features that are the poetry of a landscape, with more decision and authority.

When the Revolution of 1848 broke out, Daubigny was beginning to be known and was awarded a second class medal at the Salon. That summer, too, he visited Dauphine and was greatly charmed by the huge lakes of that region. He returned there several times and we see the charm the place must have had for him. Daubigny was irresistibly attracted by water, and he excelled in depicting its different aspects.



Louis Marie Lemaire,
June in Arcades, 1869.
Oil on canvas, 67 x 55 cm.
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Louis Senlecq, L'Isle-Adam.
(p. 234)

Charles-François Daubigny,
Undergrowth in Valmondois, 1877.
Oil on canvas, 125 x 89 cm.
Musée Camille-Pissarro, Pontoise.

In the suburbs of Paris, Daubigny was particularly fond of painting the neighbourhood of Auvers with the Oise and its little islets, and tall poplars rustling with the faintest breeze under a blue sky. The attraction which water had for Daubigny was such that the long hours spent near it were not enough for him, and finally he was able to realise the dream he had had for many years of living on it so that he might study it at any hour of the day or night. He had a boat built-to-order, which he named the Botin, which was a kind of floating studio, which would allow him to paint the subjects he chose in any weather.

The simplest subjects now satisfied him, which he made interesting through his very sincerity. The knowledge acquired by his constant study of nature enabled Daubigny to discern and depict the true characteristics of countries that were new to him.

Daubigny possessed a sense of the pictorial in the highest degree. There is perfect cohesion in each of his works, and they all attest the enthusiasm of the artist and the pleasure he took in painting them. With his increased ease and facility of execution, he was able to express any impression which struck him. The grace of the country in its most rural spots, the entrance to little villages, the orchards and meadows around them and their streams or rivers all appealed to him, much more than woods and forests. Painting outdoors in damp places, during the hours of morning mists and evening dews, finally affected his health. In 1872, as he was troubled with gout, he went to Uriage and afterwards to try the Cauterets water in the Pyrenees. The disease gained in severity and, compelled to stay in his studio, he commenced some compositions which he had been contemplating for several years. In 1876, as a diversion from his suffering, he thought he would take a trip in his boat, the Botin. This imprudence caused him more harm and he returned to his beautiful Oise scenery where, as long as he possibly could, he continued to paint. In 1878, he died in Valmondois.

Constant Troyon (1810-1865), who was born in Sevres, was seven years older than Daubigny. His parents were employed in the Sevres porcelain manufactory, and when the child was old enough he was apprenticed there. He soon showed an inclination for painting, and his godfather, who was manager of the works, seeing his first sketches from nature and taking great interest in the boy, sent him to Victor Bertin for an artistic education. The latter exercised great influence over Troyon, more particularly at the beginning of his career. When he was out painting one day near Sevres, Camille Roqueplan was struck with his precocious facility and advised him to go to Paris to live. He introduced him to Jules Dupré and Diaz. As early as 1833, Troyon's works were accepted in the Salon and in 1838, 1840 and 1846, he obtained one after the other the third, second and first class medals. For a short time he attempted academic landscape painting.

With regard to his execution he aimed at romanticism, and Théophile Gautier himself protested against his excessive use of thick paint, saying that he "went beyond all possible limits in this respect." In these landscapes of somewhat heavy touch and crude colouring, the young artist began to introduce animals and figures, which were at first mere accessories, but to which he gradually attributed more importance.

Endowed with very remarkable gifts, Jean Désiré Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) went through life like a sort of workman in art. His intelligence was somewhat limited and he was extremely vain, but at the same time he possessed some of the rare qualities which make a painter. He had a keen eye, for instance, and a ready hand and instinctive boldness, which permitted him to deal with all subjects, even those for which he was the least prepared. There is no need here to speak of him as a figure painter. We have only to consider the landscapist.

Courbet was born in the little town of Ornans, in the midst of a very picturesque district with varied scenery, whose most striking aspects he portrays with great truthfulness and force. He depicts its greyish rocks level with the tops of the valleys of the Loue; the capricious windings of the pretty river with its clear, rapid waters; the bold harmonies of its hillocks covered with snow; its woods of luxuriant green in summer and of the most brilliant colours in winter.

The Wave, it seems, is, in this genre, Courbet's masterpiece. In this picture there is a certain grandeur of composition and a very vigorous colour scheme, but there are layers of thick paint which unfortunately give to the receding waves a rigid and solid appearance. In other seascapes the painter has secured a remarkably liquid colouring and lightness of handling, so that the blue of the sky and the greener blue of the ocean harmonise well with the golden sand of the shore, on which the sea dies away in a silvery streak. In the exquisite truthfulness and the gentle lingering of the waves Courbet here attains to poetry. Nevertheless, he was compelled to leave the country, choosing Switzerland for his place of exile, where he remained until his death in 1877.

Landscapists born after 1820

The landscapists of whom we have spoken were all born before 1820 and belonged to the generation which was more or less

Gustave Courbet,
The Wave, 1869.
Oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm.
National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.





affected by the Romantic Movement. But all the wealth of talent which manifested itself at this period was not to die away again without exercising its influence on later generations. It continued, and although in this study a lack of space forbids us to do more than speak of those who are dead, it is only fair that those whose originality was the most marked should find a special place in these pages.

As we have already said, most of these artists were especially attracted by certain districts, whose particular beauty they were more likely to appreciate on account, perhaps, of their own origin and temperament. Such artists were drawn to the places of their predilection, and the longer they stayed there the more apt they became to comprehend and to express their distinctive characteristics. The excessive specialisation which we see in all branches of intellectual activity in these days could not fail to be carried into painting, and consequently we find that most of our landscapists confine themselves to the almost exclusive study of a given region.

All the provinces of France gradually found faithful interpreters of their special characteristics; landscapists, anxious to widen their domain, began to visit other countries. The East had attracted their attention for some time and was in vogue both in literature and in art. Victor Hugo had sung its charms and Diaz had painted it, but without having seen it. Marilhat brought back exceedingly truthful pictures. The increased ease of travelling made for a better knowledge of countries which had hitherto not been frequented. The public, too, expected more than the summary impressions which had formerly sufficed, for people were now better able to judge the works inspired by Eastern countries. Fromentin's writings and pictures, therefore, came at the right moment for arousing public interest.

Eugène Fromentin was the son of a distinguished doctor of La Rochelle. He was born there in 1820, and had such success at college that his father wished him to pursue a literary career. He went to Paris first to study law, but his natural tastes inclined him to seek literary society. He therefore approached some of the writers most prominent at that time. In his spare time he delighted in visiting the Louvre and finally, instead of preparing for his examination, he obtained his parents' permission to study painting. In 1843, he began to take lessons with Rémond, the landscapist who had been Rousseau's professor, and the following year he went to Cabat, to whom he was to be forever grateful. His admiration for Marilhat's works exercised great influence over him and attracted him to Algeria. On his first journey there in 1846 he was completely fascinated by the charm of the country. In 1848, 1852 and 1853, he went again to Constantine and to Biskra, and the studies



Eugène Fromentin,
Waiting for the Ferryboat Across the Nile, 1872.
Oil on canvas, 79 x 111 cm.
The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.
(p. 238)

Prosper Georges Antoine Marilhat,
A Bank of the Nile, 1831-1833.
Oil on panel, 24.5 x 32.5 cm.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



he brought back with him made his name as an artist. Almost as soon as he had settled down again he painted about ten pictures, one after the other, in which he rendered the most diverse impressions with extreme truthfulness. Although landscape had an important place in these pictures, the figures played the principal part, for the artist's aim was to give the most characteristic features of North African life. Fromentin's talent was elegant and distinguished. He suffered from the difference between his high ideals and the way in which he expressed them. Some of his pictures show very keen observation and the impression they make upon one is very striking.

Under Corot's influence, Fromentin's palette, which was at first very full, gradually became more restricted, and his compositions, although not strong, became broader and simpler. As a writer, Fromentin deserves a special place in contemporary literature. His *Un été dans le Sahara* (*One Summer in the Sahara*), published in 1856, and his novel *Dominique*, published in 1858 and 1862, placed him in the first rank of writers. His volume, entitled *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois* (*Masters of the Past*), written after a visit to Belgium and Holland for the purpose of study, thoroughly revived art criticism.

The approval he received revealed to Fromentin himself the extent and the wealth of the domain he had just discovered. A crowd of subjects suggested themselves to his mind; the masterpieces of the Louvre, the duties of the critic, and his favourite masters, particularly Delacroix and Corot. But in the very midst of his triumph, just as the

Academy was about to open its doors to him, he died suddenly in 1876, near La Rochelle, in the very heart of that country which he had so poetically described in *Dominique*.

Although Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) was not, strictly speaking, a landscapist, for the human figure had always the chief place in his compositions, we must point out here the important role which nature plays in his works, since he has wielded great influence over contemporary art, not only in France, but in the world. He was born at Lyons and his ambition was not merely to seek for the picturesque in art, but to translate, by means of art, the thoughts and aspirations of a broad and cultivated mind. He hesitated, nevertheless, for a long time before deciding on the course he should take. His technical qualities did not indicate a very special temperament and did not justify the realistic tendencies which some of his early works reveal. He was then thirty-seven, and had only just found his right path. The large decorative works which followed revealed, under different aspects but with a clearly pronounced doctrine, the wealth of invention, and the originality and distinction that were never lacking in his interpretations of fine subjects. Nature is closely united to his compositions and serves them always as a living and expressive commentary. The perfect balance of the principal masses, the

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes,
Allegory of Life, c.1873.
Oil on canvas, 32 x 67 cm.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Pierre Puvis de Chavannes,
The Poor Fisherman, 1881.
Oil on canvas, 155.5 x 192.5 cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Landscape Painting



rhythm of line and the choice of the dominating colours emphasise the character and harmonise with the subject and architecture of the buildings for which the pictures were intended. The details of the landscape used for the setting of the composition are always taken from reality, but are transfigured and put together by the artist, who subordinates them to the requirements of his subject and to the scheme he has in his mind.

The pictures present allegorical figures personifying the general ideas which Puvis de Chavannes had to express. They are all cleverly grouped and united, but it was to nature that he turned for the special features which would give significance to each figure.

Whilst using the subjects which were offered to him by reality, the artist's imagination created them afresh, as it were. This was the result of an extremely refined culture rather than of an inspiration drawn spontaneously from nature. More often than not he did not consult nature until afterwards, according to the need he had of further study for his work.

By appealing to the imagination of the spectator, it cannot fail to win sympathy and admiration. If the works of Puvis de Chavannes, by the very diversity of their commentaries and the developments they suggest, appeal more to literary men, it must not be forgotten that their original qualities were first appreciated by artists who, recognising the worth of his pictures, expressed their admiration of them. The public, distrustful of innovations at the time, had its attention called to Puvis de Chavannes by his brother artists.

It took some time for the reaction to begin, as the neophytes, in their idolatry, proclaimed extensively the absolute perfection of all the works of Puvis de Chavannes. They admired not only his large decorative compositions, but also his smaller pictures which, without having the same merits, had still more evident faults. The execution was clumsy and summary, the colouring gloomy and lacking in variation, and, with very evident peculiarities, the work was more literary than pictorial. In *The Poor Fisherman*, for instance, the landscape and the figures, both in form and colour manifest a poverty that is too artificially exaggerated to be very touching. The drooping flowers, which the young girl is gathering "feverishly and mechanically in this strange flower-bed" could only have grown in the *Forest of Rhetoric*. In order to interest us in this wretched place and in the pitiable lot of these poor people, Puvis de Chavannes evidently felt the necessity of supplying us with a commentary, intended to explain its beauties and to transform the imperfections into merits. The elder sister is at "an awkward age," which perhaps explains "her monkey-like little hand" and her mechanical gestures. "Her mother is dead (sic jubeo)," adds the author, and it is just as



Caspar David Friedrich,
Woman before the Setting Sun, c.1818.
Oil on canvas, 22 x 30.5 cm.
Museum Folkwang, Essen.

John Everett Millais,
The Blind Girl, 1856.
Oil on canvas, 80.8 x 53.4 cm.
Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, Birmingham.

Arnold Böcklin,
Island of the Dead, 1880.
Oil on panel, 73.7 x 121.9 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
(p. 244-245)

Landscape Painting





well that he tells us this, as the picture does not indicate it. "I have a horror of a novel illustrated in oils," he says without being aware that, while he is objecting to this, he is giving us one. Puvis de Chavannes felt too cramped in these works of small dimensions, and his particular style was not suited to them. For his compositions, he needed the walls of buildings. It is necessary to stand well back in order to see at a glance the decorative qualities of his work, the expressive outlines and the original harmony consisting of a few softened colours, which vibrate and agree so well with the character of the subject. But on looking at his important works it would be unfair to dwell on faults of detail, when there is so much cohesion, nobility and poetry in the whole.

In spite of the incoherent tendencies of the contemporary school, his pictures are a proof that although everything has been done, everything can yet be done afresh, and that the simplest subjects, and even the most hackneyed, can always be interpreted anew. After so many centuries and so many masterpieces, it is still possible to discover unexplored veins in the domain of art.

It certainly seems natural that the complete expansion of landscape painting should take place in France, where the most diverse scenery is to be found. The Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean wash its shores, the Pyrenees and the Alps form its boundaries, and both North and South offer the extreme variety of its skies, rivers, and forests; the finest contrasts for artists. Most of the French provinces have had their special painters and, besides the great masters of whom we have already spoken, very many others deserve to be mentioned here. Unfortunately the proportions of this book do not allow this.

Many foreign artists have imitated the French landscapists and frequently studied in their schools. They have followed their example in their own native country, or even in France, and have become rivals of the French artists. Johan Barthold Jongkind (1819-1891) paid several visits to Paris, and his influence was among the first of the French Impressionists. A Dutchman by birth, he was never tired of painting the familiar aspects of the rural scenery of his own country. He depicted warped, shaky-looking houses; thick, glossy meadow grass; mills with large sails reflected in the still waters of the canals; all under the indistinct light of the moon or pale sunrays filtering through thick clouds. His colouring is variegated and frequently discordant, and his execution is somewhat clumsy and rough.

On the other side of the English Channel, Sir John Everett Millais (1829-1896), who was first recognised among the little group of Pre-Raphaelites and known as a painter of imaginative subjects, has perhaps done his best work in depicting English scenery. His

sincere love of nature induced him to adopt this line of work towards the end of his career.

Let us focus now on the German landscapists. We cannot close the chapter without mentioning Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840). In his paintings the representation of nature and the representation of 'the Divine' are closely linked. The spiritual melancholy in *The Monk by the Sea* is one blatant example. Arnold Böcklin of Basel (1827-1901), who settled in Germany, gave new life to the mythological or allegorical subjects he treated by drawing largely from nature, but he cannot really be considered as a landscapist. In his *Isle of the Dead*, the violent contrast of the cypress blacks and the white walls appeals to the imagination and lends a strange charm of mysterious wildness to these works, unbalanced though they may be.

Giovanni Segantini (1858-1899), who was born on the borders of Italy, at Arco in the Tyrol, was inspired by French contemporary art. The first of his pictures which attracted any attention were mere imitations of Millet. As soon as his material existence was more assured, the mountains attracted Segantini. He comprehended and rendered the severe poetry of the peaks, the limpid atmosphere, the roughness of the jagged marshlands where a few stunted and twisted trees grow with difficulty, and the imposing circle of frozen peaks bounding the horizon. At times, when painting this austere scenery, he would introduce enigmatic or childish allegories. More often than not, his touch is laboured and, both for the foregrounds, distances and skies, the too obvious mosaic of violent tones, crudely juxtaposed, gives a certain monotony to his work. He is much more successful in some of his simpler pictures, in which he characterises in a powerful way all the sadness of nature and of life in these lonely regions.

These foreign landscapists, and many others whom we could add to this list, have continued the traditions of the French pioneers in a most worthy manner. Devoted to nature, they have always consulted it, sparing neither time nor trouble, and they deserve, therefore to be ranked among these earlier artists. We must add, however, that this brilliant group of conscientious workers was succeeded by a generation of artists whose first idea was to win success and who seemed anxious to do away with all the study and work, which alone can form the true landscapist. The ever-increasing number of artists, the multiplicity of exhibitions and the craving to be noticed at all costs could not fail to bring about the hasty productions, the enormous

Édouard Manet,
Luncheon on the Grass, 1863.
Oil on canvas, 208 x 264.5 cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.





canvases, and the affected eccentricities of which there was such a imposing display. But the one object of these artists was to show their independence and to give something that has never been given before. In order to achieve this end, artists almost exclusively sought after peculiar methods, a very evident attempt to arouse the curiosity of the public, to astonish and bewilder it by the boldest and most taboo experiments. Critics constituted themselves as the apostles of the new doctrines which they proclaimed in bewildering phrases, with a plentiful supply of adjectives and of words which conveyed little meaning. Meanwhile a certain number of unsuspecting amateurs, as indifferent to art as they were to nature,

followed in their train, proud in their unconscious snobbishness to appear to see farther and know more than other people. Thankful to escape, or at any rate to shorten, their apprenticeship, many youths set up for being painters without ever having learnt their profession, and were sure beforehand that their sketches would find admirers. They were implored by their admirers to stop just when difficulties were beginning, not to put another stroke to their work, not to spoil, by unnecessary emphasis, impressions which bear the stamp of their own precious personality. What is the use of so much work when good execution is a blemish and when ignorance is the surest guarantee of originality?

This expeditious and rough work is just what suits a great proportion of our public currently; people who are blasé and always in a hurry, who have no time to read books, but only to glance through them and who, in the restless life they lead, cannot

Alfred Sisley,
The Seine at Bougival in Winter (Banks of the Seine in Winter), 1872.
Oil on canvas, 46.5 x 65.5 cm.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille.



give their undivided attention to art and so require to be stopped short and startled by a picture if they are to see it at all. Side by side, however, with this troop of neophytes and incapables, there were the true artists, painting in all sincerity, whose work has been useful to contemporary art. We cannot, in this volume, speak of living painters, or we could easily give names which deserve to be ranked with those of our great landscapists.

Alfred Sisley (1840-1899) is an exception. In spite of the somewhat rough handling of his composition and of his summary drawing, Sisley sometimes expressed the radiation and vibration of light with harmonies and effects that had scarcely been attempted before him. One of the advantages that the initiative of the Impressionists has given us is lighter painting. Considering the darkness of winter and the poor lighting available in so many houses of the time, it was certainly better to substitute a fresher and more luminous represen-

tation of nature for the heavy tones of the preceding period, leaving to time alone the making of old pictures. Within just limits, the attempt of the reformers would have been approved. However, disdainful contempt for the art of the past, particularly for the qualities they did not possess themselves, and the presumption of their pretensions, was singularly out of proportion to the merit of their own works.

Claude Monet,
Cliff Top Walk at Pourville, 1882.
Oil on canvas, 66.5 x 82.3 cm.
The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

Paul Cézanne,
Lake Annecy, 1896.
Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm.
The Courtauld Gallery, London.
(p. 250)



Conclusion

It is not merely by audacity that a painter suddenly becomes a great artist. In the history of art we have frequent instances of the great obstacles that insufficient instruction has posed to the development of originality. However, we do not know of any obstacles that have been the result of thorough instruction at an early age, completed later by the information which the landscapist can only obtain by a study of nature itself. We have only to compare the extreme diversity which we see in the works of the great masters with the monotony of slightly more contemporary innovators. We see in these summary sketches the conventions and the narrow, systematic formulae which these painters seemed to copy from each other.

Art is no doubt old, but, although the more thorough knowledge and comprehension of the works of the past may have developed in us a critical mind which might shackle production, nature is older than art. In the sincere communion, whom those who love nature will never fail to demand, they may rest assured that, although everything may have been said before their day, everything remains yet to be said. The masterpieces which our predecessors have bequeathed to us are certainly innumerable, but the wealth of nature is infinite and we need not fear that the source from which they drew their inspirations will ever be exhausted.

Notes

¹ In 1990, *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee* was stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, along with twelve other artworks, including *Landscape with an Obelisk*. None of the artworks have been recovered at the time of publication.

² Once believed to be by Rembrandt, it was discovered in 1980 that his student, Govaert Flinck, is the artist.

³ In 2008, *The Colossus*, a work long associated with Goya, was discovered to have been painted by Asensio Juliá, one of Goya's followers. The attribution is generally, but not universally, accepted.

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Although considered a minor genre for a long time, landscape painting has risen above its predecessors – religious and historic painting – to become a genre of its own. Giorgione in Italy, the Brueghels of the Flemish School, Lorrain and Poussin of the French School, the Dutch landscape painters, and Turner and Constable of England, are just a few of the great landscapists who have left their indelible mark on the history of pictorial landscapes and the art of painting as a whole.

After a long time serving simply as a backdrop for paintings and as a skill-practising exercise for artists, nature came to be observed for its own sake and was incorporated into works of art as an illustration of an enlightened and scientific study of the world. Through continual change, it has inspired the greatest painters and has allowed some others, like Turner, to transcend the relentless search for mere realism in pictorial representation.

Through this study, Émile Michel offers an exceptional panorama, from the 15th century to the present, of art and the way artists portray the world in all its splendour.