

**LITTLE  
MASTERPIECES**

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Little Masterpieces by John Ruskin & Bliss Perry

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**JOHN RUSKIN & BLISS PERRY**

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# Little Masterpieces

Edited by Bliss Perry

JOHN RUSKIN

THE TWO BOYHOODS

THE SLAVE SHIP

THE MOUNTAIN GLOOM

THE MOUNTAIN GLORY

VENICE

ST. MARK'S

ART AND MORALS

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE

PEACE

NEW YORK

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1902



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## Editor's Introduction

MR. RUSKIN'S writings have been so copious, and so varied in theme and temper, that no two of his admirers would be likely to agree in their selection of characteristic passages from his books. The editor of the present volume cannot hope that it will wholly satisfy those readers who already know their Ruskin well. He has simply endeavored, by a chronological arrangement of carefully chosen extracts, to show something of the succession of themes that have occupied Mr. Ruskin's mind, as well as the sort of writing which early established and has long sustained his reputation as a master of English.

The hero of his first work, "Modern Painters," was the artist Turner. Readers were first attracted by his descriptive eloquence, rather than by the intrinsic worth of his message to the public. Here was a new kind of prose,—though one more carefully modelled upon Richard Hooker and other old writers than most people

## Editor's Introduction

imagined,—a prose captivating in its music, its color, and the long supple coil of its periods. The chapter entitled “The Two Boyhoods”—Giorgione's and Turner's—is a good example of this early manner. It is followed here by Mr. Ruskin's famous description of Turner's “Slave-Ship,” a piece of writing which takes as much liberty with the picture as the picture in turn does with nature. Such writing, in Mr. Ruskin's hands, is strangely suggestive to the imagination, but in the hands of his imitators it has done much to obliterate the natural distinction between literary and graphic art and to vitiate the later prose of England and America.

The chapters upon “The Mountain Gloom” and “The Mountain Glory,” reprinted here in part, show the patient study of scientific detail, the enthusiasm for natural beauty, and the tendency to moralize upon the relations of beauty to conduct which from the first have characterized Mr. Ruskin's mind. In any one of these three directions his influence over his contemporaries would have been enough to give him distinction, but it is quite possible that what he has done to help people to use their eyes may ultimately prove a more valuable contribution to his generation than all his subtle and ingenious essays in philosophical analysis.

But there are many other ways in which he