

**MODERN
PAINTERS. PART III**

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Modern Painters. Part III by John Ruskin

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JOHN RUSKIN

**MODERN
PAINTERS. PART III**

MODERN PAINTERS.

BY

A GRADUATE OF OXFORD.

"Accuse me not
Of servance,
If, having walked with Nature,
And offered, far as frailty would allow,
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,
I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,
Whom I have served, that their Divinity
Revolts, offended at the ways of men,
Philosophers, who, though the human soul,
Be of a thousand faculties composed,
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize
This soul, and the transcendent universe
No more than as a mirror that reflects
To proud Self-love her own intelligence."

WORDSWORTH.

PART III.

SECOND AMERICAN FROM THE THIRD LONDON EDITION.

REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.

NEW YORK:
WILEY & HALSTED,
No. 251 BROADWAY.
1858.

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TO THE
LANDSCAPE ARTISTS OF ENGLAND,

This Work

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR SINCERE ADMIRER,

THE AUTHOR.

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PART III.
OF IDEAS OF BEAUTY.

SECTION I.
OF THE THEORETIC FACULTY.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE RANK AND RELATIONS OF THE THEORETIC FACULTY.

ALTHOUGH the hasty execution and controversial tone of the former portions of this essay have been subjects of frequent regret to the writer, yet the one was in some measure excusable in a work referred to a temporary end, and the other unavoidable, in one directed against particular opinions. Nor are either of any necessary detriment to its availability as a foundation for more careful and extended survey, in so far as its province was confined to the assertion of obvious and visible facts, the verification of which could in no degree be dependent either on the care with which they might be classed, or the temper in which they were regarded. Not so with respect to the investigation now before us, which, being not of things outward, and sensibly demonstrable, but of the value and meaning of mental impressions, must be entered upon with a modesty and cautiousness proportioned to the difficulty of determining the likeness, or community of such impressions, as they are received by different men, and with seriousness proportioned to the importance of rightly regarding those faculties over which we have moral power, and therefore in relation to which we assuredly incur a

§ 1. With what care the subject is to be approached.

moral responsibility. There is not the thing left to the choice of man to do or not to do, but there is some sort or degree of duty involved in his determination; and by how much the more, therefore, our subject becomes embarrassed by the cross influences of variously admitted passion, administered discipline, or encouraged affection, upon the minds of men, by so much the more it becomes matter of weight and import to observe by what laws we should be guided, and of what responsibilities regardful, in all that we admit, administer, or encourage.

§ 2. And of what importance considered. Nor indeed have I ever, even in the preceding sections, spoken with levity, though sometimes perhaps with rashness. I have never treated the subject as other than demanding heedful and serious examination, and taking high place among those which justify as they reward our utmost ardor and earnestness of pursuit. That it justifies them must be my present task to prove; that it demands them has never been doubted. Art, properly so called, is no recreation; it cannot be learned at spare moments, nor pursued when we have nothing better to do. It is no handiwork for drawing-room tables; no relief of the ennui of boudoirs; it must be understood and undertaken seriously or not at all. To advance it men's lives must be given, and to receive it their hearts. "Le peintre Rubens s'amuse à être ambassadeur," said one with whom, but for his own words, we might have thought that effort had been absorbed in power, and the labor of his art in its felicity.—"È faticoso lo studio della pittura, et sempre si fa il mare maggiore," said he, who of all men was least likely to have left us discouraging report of anything that majesty of intellect could grasp, or continuity of labor overcome.* But that this labor, the necessity of which in all ages has been most frankly admitted by the greatest men, is justifiable in a moral point of view, that it is not the pouring out of men's lives upon the ground, that it has functions of usefulness addressed to the weightiest of human interests, and that the objects of it have calls upon us which it is inconsistent alike with our human dignity and our heavenward duty to disobey—has never been boldly asserted nor fairly admitted; least of all is it likely to be so in these days of dispatch and display, where vanity, on the one side, supplies the place of that love of art which is the only effective

* Tintoret. (Ridolf. Vita.)

patronage, and on the other, of the incorruptible and earnest pride which no applause, no reprobation, can blind to its short-comings, nor beguile of its hope.

And yet it is in the expectation of obtaining at least a partial acknowledgment of this, as a truth influential both of aim and conduct, that I enter upon the second division of my subject. The time I have already devoted to the task I should have considered altogether inordinate, and that which I fear may be yet required for its completion would have been cause to me of utter discouragement, but that the object I propose to myself is of no partial nor accidental importance. It is not now to distinguish between disputed degrees of ability in individuals, or agreeableness in canvases, it is not now to expose the ignorance or defend the principles of party or person. It is to summon the moral energies of the nation to a forgotten duty, to display the use, force, and function of a great body of neglected sympathies and desires, and to elevate to its healthy and beneficial operation that art which, being altogether addressed to them, rises or falls with their variableness of vigor,—now leading them with Tyrtæan fire, now singing them to sleep with baby murmurings.

Only as I fear that with many of us the recommendation of our own favorite pursuits is rooted more in conceit of ourselves, than affection towards others, so that sometimes in our very pointing of the way, we had rather that the intricacy of it should be admired than unfolded, whence a natural distrust of such recommendation may well have place in the minds of those who have not yet perceived any value in the thing praised, and because also, men in the present century understand the word Useful in a strange way, or at least (for the word has been often so accepted from the beginning of time) since in these days, they act its more limited meaning farther out, and give to it more practical weight and authority, it will be well in the outset that I define exactly what kind of utility I mean to attribute to art, and especially to that branch of it which is concerned with those impressions of external beauty whose nature it is our present object to discover.

That is to everything created, pre-eminently useful, which enables it rightly and fully to perform the functions appointed to it by its Creator. Therefore, that we may deter-

§ 3. The doubtful force of the term "utility."

§ 4. Its proper sense