

**HAND BOOK TO  
EXHIBITION OF LINE  
ENGRAVINGS AFTER  
WATER COLOR DRAWINGS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649375967

Hand book to exhibition of line engravings after water color drawings by J. M. W. Turner

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**J. M. W. TURNER**

**HAND BOOK TO  
EXHIBITION OF LINE  
ENGRAVINGS AFTER  
WATER COLOR DRAWINGS**



FOGG ART MUSEUM

HAND BOOK

TO

EXHIBITION OF LINE ENGRAVINGS AFTER  
WATER COLOR DRAWINGS BY  
J. M. W. TURNER



HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

MAY, 1906

## PREFATORY NOTE

---

THE prints, after the works of Turner, here brought together are lent by Mr. Francis Bullard '86, and have been selected by him from his own large collection. They are nearly all proof impressions, and some are trial proofs touched by Turner's hand to indicate desired corrections.

The modern art of line engraving reached its supreme excellence in England during the early part of the nineteenth century, and, as Mr. Bullard has stated in the accompanying introductory essay, this excellence was largely due to Turner's personal influence.

Since Turner's death the recognition of his genius has steadily grown, and the high esteem in which it is now held is not likely to diminish in the future. By the range of his creative imagination, his powers of design, his quick discernment of the essential and expressive characteristics of form, and his unexampled rendering of effects of light and space, he has exalted landscape painting to the rank of highest art.

Turner's art embraces, in balanced development, as far as the means of art permit, all of the qualities which in nature make up our visual impressions, but after which other landscapists have striven more or less singly. He has the elegance of Claude, the fulness of the Pre-Raphaelites, and the light of the impressionists: and he coördinates these and other elements so as to stimulate the imagination, and satisfy the

cultivated sense of harmony and rhythm. The prints exhibited in this collection convey so much of the finest qualities of the master's works as to make them priceless possessions to those who are able to appreciate them.

The introductory essay and the catalogue are by Mr. Bullard. The account of technical processes is by Mr. T. H. Thomas, and the more extended list of engravings after Turner is by Miss Laura H. Dudley.

CHARLES H. MOORE.

## INTRODUCTION

---

IT is not the fashion to-day to admire the line engravings after Turner. The essential value of these prints, however, lies in what they reflect of Turner's genius. This master did no line engraving himself, though he engraved in mezzotint; but he supervised the work of these line engravers, making corrections with pencil, with chalk, and sometimes with his penknife on the trial proofs as the plates were in progress. Turner's corrections of the proofs are of great interest as showing what effects he wanted, and also how new ideas came to him as he revised the engravers' work. So complete was his knowledge of the pictorial art that with a touch of chalk or scratch with his penknife he made swift changes that improved the plate wonderfully. Notwithstanding all his careful and painstaking labor the engravings, which popularized his exquisite water-color drawings, have still the flavor of a commercial enterprise, though undertaken in a masterly fashion and carried out with an astonishing craft. Yet beyond all doubt these engravings are exceedingly fine in their way. Look over the set of the "Richmondshire," or the "England and Wales" or the "Rivers of France." Among the latter notice the consummate skill in the rendering of light both in sky and water in such plates as "Rietz near Saumur," "Chateau de Tancarville," "Rouen" (4th plate), "Jumièges." Others, almost as fine, might be mentioned. The vignettes for Rogers' "Italy" and Rogers' "Poems" are most lovely, though some connoisseurs condemn the niggling accuracy and highly polished smoothness of the work.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For warm praise of these engravings see Ruskin's "Elements of Drawing," first edition, pages 91-97.



To understand fully the charm of these prints it is necessary to have seen some of Turner's work, and nowhere can it be studied to such advantage as in the National Gallery, London. Something, however, can be done in the Fogg Art Museum, where there are a few very beautiful specimens of Turner's water-color drawings, and also some remarkable copies made by William Ward.<sup>1</sup> These copies are on the screen facing the door of the print room.

The print collector<sup>2</sup> is not so much concerned with Turner's oil paintings as with the marvellous sketches, made between the years 1814 and 1834, with which he must be familiar in order to judge of the worth of the translation into line engraving. The Edinburgher says of 'Turner's water-color drawing in an article on Turner, October, 1903: —

"He developed undreamt-of possibilities in it, transforming it into an adequate and beautiful form of expression, deficient only in something of the weight and power of oil painting. In the 'Southern Coast' and Yorkshire drawings, . . . and in the 'Rivers of England' series, we can recognize the finer quality and fabric of the artist's mind. In little drawings like 'Hornby Castle' ('Yorkshire series'),<sup>3</sup> . . . 'Norham Castle' ('Rivers of England'), we find that 'new sense of exquisite regard for common things which made the 'Windsor' and the 'Frosty Morning' so delightful.'"

He points out that: —

"The influence of the material in which an artist works — its helpfulness and the constraint it exercises over the realization of the artist's conception — has not received the attention it deserves."

It is important for the print collector to bear this in mind, because the artist's original work undergoes a translation from water-color drawing to engraving.

<sup>1</sup> Of Richmond, Surrey, England.

<sup>2</sup> The following passages, with some slight alterations, are taken from my introduction to the catalogue of 'Turner's Liber Studiorum, which was made for an exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, February, 1904. The Museum authorities have kindly granted me permission to do so.

<sup>3</sup> Richmondshire series.

Turner has been curiously misrepresented in line engraving. For example in some of the plates groups of figures in the foreground lose the value and meaning which they have in the original sketch, though even in Turner's drawings the figures are often ugly, but the ugliness seems exaggerated in the engraving. In the water-color drawings the figures are glorious masses of color essential to the design. In the prints the objects in the foreground often distract our attention and are certainly the least successful parts of these engravings. The breadth of the original drawing is often injured by the "making out" and excessive brilliance of the details, which produce a spotty effect. Especially is this the case when the plate has worn a little and the whites become prominent in the later printing on thick paper. The proofs, it should be noted, were printed on India paper. Turner is said to have desired the engraving to "sparkle," in order to catch the popular eye, and whether this be so or not the "making out" of the engraver impairs the chiaroscuro of the original drawing.

We are fortunate to have a superb example of Turner's work here in the water-color drawing of "Devonport" (given to the Fogg Museum by Mr. Fairfax Murray of London in memory of William J. Stillman), and if we compare the original drawing with the engraving, which is in Case No. 9, we shall find, in the first place, that the drawing has been reduced in size; secondly, we shall see how much the color glorifies the groups of figures in the foreground and how the sky loses its magnificence, when translated into black and white. The drawing of "Tintagel," which has been engraved in the "Southern Coast," is also in the Fogg Museum. The engraving is not exhibited because it is not successful; but it will be shown to any one interested in the subject, if asked for at the desk.

Turner made over twenty thousand drawings and sketches.

There are many beautiful engravings after Turner's designs and it seems strange so little attention has been paid to them in this country, but in London these engravings, though belonging originally each to some series, are nowadays often

sold separately and for the small sums of three, or five, or ten dollars apiece. Is it because these engravings are still not rare that they are not more sought after, or is it because the poetic imagination of Turner, which is exquisitely reflected in some of these prints, is not appreciated?

Turner had his moments of weariness, if we judge by the engravings after his works. Out of the ninety-six plates for the "England and Wales," ten or more one may not care especially to see again, while there are forty that we look at with ever-increasing delight. In some of the others study will reveal rare beauty, while the rest are of comparative insignificance. As an example of Turner's design, look at the print of "Nottingham" from the "Picturesque Views in England and Wales." Notice how the figures are grouped with perfect naturalness and yet compose well in relation to the sail of the boat, and how the sail is caught up and echoed by the rudder to the right, so that the composition is beautifully balanced and harmonious. Mr. Ruskin dwells at length on this drawing in "Modern Painters," Vol. IV, page 29 seq.

Most of the line-engraved plates served for book illustration. Before the plates had printed titles, a number of proofs were struck off, and these prints are called artist's, or engraver's, proofs. There are also lettered proofs on India paper, printed after the select artist's proofs, but before the first edition of the book. The book itself passed through many editions and the plates deteriorated, losing the subtle gradations of the earlier impressions. Compare a fine set of engraver's proofs of the "Rogers' Italy" or "Picturesque Views in England and Wales" with the impressions in the first edition of the book, and a noticeable difference will be discovered; although no such change occurs as between a beautiful first state of the *Liber* and a late worn impression, from which every trace of the original bloom has faded away.<sup>1</sup>

To find the most beautiful of these line engravings one must look through the various series, — the "Southern Coast" (84

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the *Liber* Catalogue.