

RUSKIN JOHN

THE ELEMENTS OF
DRAWING, IN THREE
LETTERS TO BEGINNERS

John Ruskin

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Содержание

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION	6
PREFACE	7
THE ELEMENTS OF DRAWING	12
LETTER I.	12
EXERCISE I	13
EXERCISE II	15
EXERCISE III	16
EXERCISE IV	17
EXERCISE V	18
EXERCISE VI	19
EXERCISE VII	21
EXERCISE VIII	23
EXERCISE IX	29
EXERCISE X	29
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	33

John Ruskin

The Elements of Drawing, in Three Letters to Beginners

["The Elements of Drawing" was written during the winter of 1856. The First Edition was published in 1857; the Second followed in the same year, with some additions and slight alterations. The Third Edition consisted of sixth thousand, 1859; seventh thousand, 1860; and eighth thousand, 1861.

The work was partly reproduced in "Our Sketching Club," by the Rev. R. St. John Tyrwhitt, M.A., 1874; with new editions in 1875, 1882, and 1886.

Mr. Ruskin meant, during his tenure of the Slade Professorship at Oxford, to recast his teaching, and to write a systematic manual for the use of his Drawing School, under the title of "The Laws of Fésolé." Of this only vol. i. was completed, 1879; second edition, 1882.

As, therefore, "The Elements of Drawing" has never been completely superseded, and as many readers of Mr. Ruskin's works have expressed a desire to possess the book in its old form, it is now reprinted as it stood in 1859.]

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION

As one or two questions, asked of me since the publication of this work, have indicated points requiring elucidation, I have added a few short notes in the first Appendix. It is not, I think, desirable otherwise to modify the form or add to the matter of a book as it passes through successive editions; I have, therefore, only mended the wording of some obscure sentences; with which exception the text remains, and will remain, in its original form, which I had carefully considered. Should the public find the book useful, and call for further editions of it, such additional notes as may be necessary will be always placed in the first Appendix, where they can be at once referred to, in any library, by the possessors of the earlier editions; and I will take care they shall not be numerous.

August 3, 1857.

PREFACE

i. It may perhaps be thought, that in prefacing a manual of drawing, I ought to expatiate on the reasons why drawing should be learned; but those reasons appear to me so many and so weighty, that I cannot quickly state or enforce them. With the reader's permission, as this volume is too large already, I will waive all discussion respecting the importance of the subject, and touch only on those points which may appear questionable in the method of its treatment.

ii. In the first place, the book is not calculated for the use of children under the age of twelve or fourteen. I do not think it advisable to engage a child in any but the most voluntary practice of art. If it has talent for drawing, it will be continually scrawling on what paper it can get; and should be allowed to scrawl at its own free will, due praise being given for every appearance of care, or truth, in its efforts. It should be allowed to amuse itself with cheap colors almost as soon as it has sense enough to wish for them. If it merely daubs the paper with shapeless stains, the color-box may be taken away till it knows better: but as soon as it begins painting red coats on soldiers, striped flags to ships, etc., it should have colors at command; and, without restraining its choice of subject in that imaginative and historical art, of a military tendency, which children delight in, (generally quite as valuable, by the way, as any historical art delighted in by their elders,) it should be gently led by the parents to try to draw, in such childish fashion as may be, the things it can see and likes,—birds, or butterflies, or flowers, or fruit.

iii. In later years, the indulgence of using the color should only be granted as a reward, after it has shown care and progress in its drawings with pencil. A limited number of good and amusing prints should always be within a boy's reach: in these days of cheap illustration he can hardly possess a volume of nursery tales without good wood-cuts in it, and should be encouraged to copy what he likes best of this kind; but should be firmly restricted to a *few* prints and to a few books. If a child has many toys, it will get tired of them and break them; if a boy has many prints he will merely dawdle and scrawl over them; it is by the limitation of the number of his possessions that his pleasure in them is perfected, and his attention concentrated. The parents need give themselves no trouble in instructing him, as far as drawing is concerned, beyond insisting upon economical and neat habits with his colors and paper, showing him the best way of holding pencil and rule, and, so far as they take notice of his work, pointing out where a line is too short or too long, or too crooked, when compared with the copy; *accuracy* being the first and last thing they look for. If the child shows talent for inventing or grouping figures, the parents should neither check, nor praise it. They may laugh with it frankly, or show pleasure in what it has done, just as they show pleasure in seeing it well, or cheerful; but they must not praise it for being clever, any more than they would praise it for being stout. They should praise it only for what costs it self-denial, namely attention and hard work; otherwise they will make it work for vanity's sake, and always badly. The best books to put into its hands are those illustrated by George Cruikshank or by Richter. (See Appendix.) At about the age of twelve or fourteen, it is quite time enough to set youth or girl to serious work; and then this book will, I think, be useful to them; and I have good hope it may be so, likewise, to persons of more advanced age wishing to know something of the first principles of art.

iv. Yet observe, that the method of study recommended is not brought forward as absolutely the best, but only as the best which I can at present devise for an isolated student. It is very likely that farther experience in teaching may enable me to modify it with advantage in several important respects; but I am sure the main principles of it are sound, and most of the exercises as useful as they can be rendered without a master's superintendence. The method differs, however, so materially from that generally adopted by drawing-masters, that a word or two of explanation may be needed to justify what might otherwise be thought willful eccentricity.

v. The manuals at present published on the subject of drawing are all directed, as far as I know, to one or other of two objects. Either they propose to give the student a power of dexterous sketching with pencil or water-color, so as to emulate (at considerable distance) the slighter work of our second-rate artists; or they propose to give him such accurate command of mathematical forms as may afterwards enable him to design rapidly and cheaply for manufactures. When drawing is taught as an accomplishment, the first is the aim usually proposed; while the second is the object kept chiefly in view at Marlborough House, and in the branch Government Schools of Design.

vi. Of the fitness of the modes of study adopted in those schools, to the end specially intended, judgment is hardly yet possible; only, it seems to me, that we are all too much in the habit of confusing art as *applied* to manufacture, with manufacture itself. For instance, the skill by which an inventive workman designs and molds a beautiful cup, is skill of true art; but the skill by which that cup is copied and afterwards multiplied a thousandfold, is skill of manufacture: and the faculties which enable one workman to design and elaborate his original piece, are not to be developed by the same system of instruction as those which enable another to produce a maximum number of approximate copies of it in a given time. Farther: it is surely inexpedient that any reference to purposes of manufacture should interfere with the education of the artist himself. Try first to manufacture a Raphael; then let Raphael direct your manufacture. He will design you a plate, or cup, or a house, or a palace, whenever you want it, and design them in the most convenient and rational way; but do not let your anxiety to reach the platter and the cup interfere with your education of the Raphael. Obtain first the best work you can, and the ablest hands, irrespective of any consideration of economy or facility of production. Then leave your trained artist to determine how far art can be popularized, or manufacture ennobled.

vii. Now, I believe that (irrespective of differences in individual temper and character) the excellence of an artist, as such, depends wholly on refinement of perception, and that it is this, mainly, which a master or a school can teach; so that while powers of invention distinguish man from man, powers of perception distinguish school from school. All great schools enforce delicacy of drawing and subtlety of sight: and the only rule which I have, as yet, found to be without exception respecting art, is that all great art is delicate.

viii. Therefore, the chief aim and bent of the following system is to obtain, first, a perfectly patient, and, to the utmost of the pupil's power, a delicate method of work, such as may insure his seeing truly. For I am nearly convinced, that when once we see keenly enough, there is very little difficulty in drawing what we see; but, even supposing that this difficulty be still great, I believe that the sight is a more important thing than the drawing; and I would rather teach drawing that my pupils may learn to love Nature, than teach the looking at Nature that they may learn to draw. It is surely also a more important thing, for young people and unprofessional students, to know how to appreciate the art of others, than to gain much power in art themselves. Now the modes of sketching ordinarily taught are inconsistent with this power of judgment. No person trained to the superficial execution of modern water-color painting, can understand the work of Titian or Leonardo; they must forever remain blind to the refinement of such men's penciling, and the precision of their thinking. But, however slight a degree of manipulative power the student may reach by pursuing the mode recommended to him in these letters, I will answer for it that he cannot go once through the advised exercises without beginning to understand what masterly work means; and, by the time he has gained some proficiency in them, he will have a pleasure in looking at the painting of the great schools, and a new perception of the exquisiteness of natural scenery, such as would repay him for much more labor than I have asked him to undergo.

ix. That labor is, nevertheless, sufficiently irksome, nor is it possible that it should be otherwise, so long as the pupil works unassisted by a master. For the smooth and straight road which admits unembarrassed progress must, I fear, be dull as well as smooth; and the hedges need to be close and trim when there is no guide to warn or bring back the erring traveler. The system followed in this work will, therefore, at first, surprise somewhat sorrowfully those who are familiar with the practice of our

class at the Working Men's College; for there, the pupil, having the master at his side to extricate him from such embarrassments as his first efforts may lead into, is *at once* set to draw from a solid object, and soon finds entertainment in his efforts and interest in his difficulties. Of course the simplest object which it is possible to set before the eye is a sphere; and, practically, I find a child's toy, a white leather ball, better than anything else; as the gradations on balls of plaster of Paris, which I use sometimes to try the strength of pupils who have had previous practice, are a little too delicate for a beginner to perceive. It has been objected that a circle, or the outline of a sphere, is one of the most difficult of all lines to draw. It is so;¹ but I do not want it to be drawn. All that his study of the ball is to teach the pupil, is the way in which shade gives the appearance of projection. This he learns most satisfactorily from a sphere; because any solid form, terminated by straight lines or flat surfaces, owes some of its appearance of projection to its perspective; but in the sphere, what, without shade, was a flat circle, becomes, merely by the added shade, the image of a solid ball; and this fact is just as striking to the learner, whether his circular outline be true or false. He is, therefore, never allowed to trouble himself about it; if he makes the ball look as oval as an egg, the degree of error is simply pointed out to him, and he does better next time, and better still the next. But his mind is always fixed on the gradation of shade, and the outline left to take, in due time, care of itself. I call it outline, for the sake of immediate intelligibility,—strictly speaking, it is merely the edge of the shade; no pupil in my class being ever allowed to draw an outline, in the ordinary sense. It is pointed out to him, from the first, that Nature relieves one mass, or one tint, against another; but outlines none. The outline exercise, the second suggested in this letter, is recommended, not to enable the pupil to draw outlines, but as the only means by which, unassisted, he can test his accuracy of eye, and discipline his hand. When the master is by, errors in the form and extent of shadows can be pointed out as easily as in outline, and the handling can be gradually corrected in details of the work. But the solitary student can only find out his own mistakes by help of the traced limit, and can only test the firmness of his hand by an exercise in which nothing but firmness is required; and during which all other considerations (as of softness, complexity, etc.) are entirely excluded.

x. Both the system adopted at the Working Men's College, and that recommended here, agree, however, in one principle, which I consider the most important and special of all that are involved in my teaching: namely, the attaching its full importance, from the first, to local color. I believe that the endeavor to separate, in the course of instruction, the observation of light and shade from that of local color, has always been, and must always be, destructive of the student's power of accurate sight, and that it corrupts his taste as much as it retards his progress. I will not occupy the reader's time by any discussion of the principle here, but I wish him to note it as the only distinctive one in my system, so far as it *is* a system. For the recommendation to the pupil to copy faithfully, and without alteration, whatever natural object he chooses to study, is serviceable, among other reasons, just because it gets rid of systematic rules altogether, and teaches people to draw, as country lads learn to ride, without saddle or stirrups; my main object being, at first, not to get my pupils to hold their reins prettily, but to "sit like a jackanapes, never off."

xi. In these written instructions, therefore, it has always been with regret that I have seen myself forced to advise anything like monotonous or formal discipline. But, to the unassisted student, such formalities are indispensable, and I am not without hope that the sense of secure advancement, and the pleasure of independent effort, may render the following out of even the more tedious exercises here proposed, possible to the solitary learner, without weariness. But if it should be otherwise, and he finds the first steps painfully irksome, I can only desire him to consider whether the acquirement of so great a power as that of pictorial expression of thought be not worth some toil; or whether it is likely, in the natural order of matters in this working world, that so great a gift should be attainable by those who will give no price for it.

¹ Or, more accurately, appears to be so, because any one can see an error in a circle.

xii. One task, however, of some difficulty, the student will find I have not imposed upon him: namely, learning the laws of perspective. It would be worth while to learn them, if he could do so easily; but without a master's help, and in the way perspective is at present explained in treatises, the difficulty is greater than the gain. For perspective is not of the slightest use, except in rudimentary work. You can draw the rounding line of a table in perspective, but you cannot draw the sweep of a sea bay; you can foreshorten a log of wood by it, but you cannot foreshorten an arm. Its laws are too gross and few to be applied to any subtle form; therefore, as you must learn to draw the subtle forms by the eye, certainly you may draw the simple ones. No great painters ever trouble themselves about perspective, and very few of them know its laws; they draw everything by the eye, and, naturally enough, disdain in the easy parts of their work rules which cannot help them in difficult ones. It would take about a month's labor to draw imperfectly, by laws of perspective, what any great Venetian will draw perfectly in five minutes, when he is throwing a wreath of leaves round a head, or bending the curves of a pattern in and out among the folds of drapery. It is true that when perspective was first discovered, everybody amused themselves with it; and all the great painters put fine saloons and arcades behind their Madonnas, merely to show that they could draw in perspective: but even this was generally done by them only to catch the public eye, and they disdained the perspective so much, that though they took the greatest pains with the circlet of a crown, or the rim of a crystal cup, in the heart of their picture, they would twist their capitals of columns and towers of churches about in the background in the most wanton way, wherever they liked the lines to go, provided only they left just perspective enough to please the public.

xiii. In modern days, I doubt if any artist among us, except David Roberts, knows so much perspective as would enable him to draw a Gothic arch to scale at a given angle and distance. Turner, though he was professor of perspective to the Royal Academy, did not know what he professed, and never, as far as I remember, drew a single building in true perspective in his life; he drew them only with as much perspective as suited him. Prout also knew nothing of perspective, and twisted his buildings, as Turner did, into whatever shapes he liked. I do not justify this; and would recommend the student at least to treat perspective with common civility, but to pay no court to it. The best way he can learn it, by himself, is by taking a pane of glass, fixed in a frame, so that it can be set upright before the eye, at the distance at which the proposed sketch is intended to be seen. Let the eye be placed at some fixed point, opposite the middle of the pane of glass, but as high or as low as the student likes; then with a brush at the end of a stick, and a little body-color that will adhere to the glass, the lines of the landscape may be traced on the glass, as you see them through it. When so traced they are all in true perspective. If the glass be sloped in any direction, the lines are still in true perspective, only it is perspective calculated for a sloping plane, while common perspective always supposes the plane of the picture to be vertical. It is good, in early practice, to accustom yourself to inclose your subject, before sketching it, with a light frame of wood held upright before you; it will show you what you may legitimately take into your picture, and what choice there is between a narrow foreground near you, and a wide one farther off; also, what height of tree or building you can properly take in, etc.²

xiv. Of figure drawing, nothing is said in the following pages, because I do not think figures, as chief subjects, can be drawn to any good purpose by an amateur. As accessories in landscape, they are just to be drawn on the same principles as anything else.

xv. Lastly: If any of the directions given subsequently to the student should be found obscure by him, or if at any stage of the recommended practice he find himself in difficulties which I have not enough provided against, he may apply by letter to Mr. Ward, who is my under drawing-master

² If the student is fond of architecture, and wishes to know more of perspective than he can learn in this rough way, Mr. Runciman (of 49 Acacia Road, St. John's Wood), who was my first drawing-master, and to whom I owe many happy hours, can teach it him quickly, easily, and rightly. [Mr. Runciman has died since this was written: Mr. Ward's present address is Bedford Chambers, 28 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.]

at the Working Men's College (45 Great Ormond Street), and who will give any required assistance, on the lowest terms that can remunerate him for the occupation of his time. I have not leisure myself in general to answer letters of inquiry, however much I may desire to do so; but Mr. Ward has always the power of referring any question to me when he thinks it necessary. I have good hope, however, that enough guidance is given in this work to prevent the occurrence of any serious embarrassment; and I believe that the student who obeys its directions will find, on the whole, that the best answerer of questions is perseverance; and the best drawing-masters are the woods and hills.

[1857.]

THE ELEMENTS OF DRAWING

LETTER I. ON FIRST PRACTICE

1. My dear Reader,—Whether this book is to be of use to you or not, depends wholly on your reason for wishing to learn to draw. If you desire only to possess a graceful accomplishment, to be able to converse in a fluent manner about drawing, or to amuse yourself listlessly in listless hours, I cannot help you: but if you wish to learn drawing that you may be able to set down clearly, and usefully, records of such things as cannot be described in words, either to assist your own memory of them, or to convey distinct ideas of them to other people; if you wish to obtain quicker perceptions of the beauty of the natural world, and to preserve something like a true image of beautiful things that pass away, or which you must yourself leave; if, also, you wish to understand the minds of great painters, and to be able to appreciate their work sincerely, seeing it for yourself, and loving it, not merely taking up the thoughts of other people about it; then I *can* help you, or, which is better, show you how to help yourself.

2. Only you must understand, first of all, that these powers, which indeed are noble and desirable, cannot be got without work. It is much easier to learn to draw well, than it is to learn to play well on any musical instrument; but you know that it takes three or four years of practice, giving three or four hours a day, to acquire even ordinary command over the keys of a piano; and you must not think that a masterly command of your pencil, and the knowledge of what may be done with it, can be acquired without painstaking, or in a *very* short time. The kind of drawing which is taught, or supposed to be taught, in our schools, in a term or two, perhaps at the rate of an hour's practice a week, is not drawing at all. It is only the performance of a few dexterous (not always even that) evolutions on paper with a black-lead pencil; profitless alike to performer and beholder, unless as a matter of vanity, and that the smallest possible vanity. If any young person, after being taught what is, in polite circles, called "drawing," will try to copy the commonest piece of real work—suppose a lithograph on the titlepage of a new opera air, or a wood-cut in the cheapest illustrated newspaper of the day,—they will find themselves entirely beaten. And yet that common lithograph was drawn with coarse chalk, much more difficult to manage than the pencil of which an accomplished young lady is supposed to have command; and that wood-cut was drawn in urgent haste, and half spoiled in the cutting afterwards; and both were done by people whom nobody thinks of as artists, or praises for their power; both were done for daily bread, with no more artist's pride than any simple handicraftsmen feel in the work they live by.

3. Do not, therefore, think that you can learn drawing, any more than a new language, without some hard and disagreeable labor. But do not, on the other hand, if you are ready and willing to pay this price, fear that you may be unable to get on for want of special talent. It is indeed true that the persons who have peculiar talent for art, draw instinctively, and get on almost without teaching; though never without toil. It is true, also, that of inferior talent for drawing there are many degrees: it will take one person a much longer time than another to attain the same results, and the results thus painfully attained are never quite so satisfactory as those got with greater ease when the faculties are naturally adapted to the study. But I have never yet, in the experiments I have made, met with a person who could not learn to draw at all; and, in general, there is a satisfactory and available power in every one to learn drawing if he wishes, just as nearly all persons have the power of learning French, Latin, or arithmetic, in a decent and useful degree, if their lot in life requires them to possess such knowledge.

4. Supposing then that you are ready to take a certain amount of pains, and to bear a little irksomeness and a few disappointments bravely, I can promise you that an hour's practice a day for six months, or an hour's practice every other day for twelve months, or, disposed in whatever way you find convenient, some hundred and fifty hours' practice, will give you sufficient power of drawing faithfully whatever you want to draw, and a good judgment, up to a certain point, of other people's work: of which hours if you have one to spare at present, we may as well begin at once.

EXERCISE I

5. Everything that you can see in the world around you, presents itself to your eyes only as an arrangement of patches of different colors variously shaded.³ Some of these patches of color have an appearance of lines or texture within them, as a piece of cloth or silk has of threads, or an animal's skin shows texture of hairs: but whether this be the case or not, the first broad aspect of the thing is that of a patch of some definite color; and the first thing to be learned is, how to produce extents of smooth color, without texture.

6. This can only be done properly with a brush; but a brush, being soft at the point, causes so much uncertainty in the touch of an unpracticed hand, that it is hardly possible to learn to draw first with it, and it is better to take, in early practice, some instrument with a hard and fine point, both that we may give some support to the hand, and that by working over the subject with so delicate a point, the attention may be properly directed to all the most minute parts of it. Even the best artists need occasionally to study subjects with a pointed instrument, in order thus to discipline their attention: and a beginner must be content to do so for a considerable period.

³ (*N.B.*—This note is only for the satisfaction of incredulous or curious readers. You may miss it if you are in a hurry, or are willing to take the statement in the text on trust.) The perception of solid Form is entirely a matter of experience. We see nothing but flat colors; and it is only by a series of experiments that we find out that a stain of black or gray indicates the dark side of a solid substance, or that a faint hue indicates that the object in which it appears is far away. The whole technical power of painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the *innocence of the eye*; that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of color, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify,—as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight. For instance: when grass is lighted strongly by the sun in certain directions, it is turned from green into a peculiar and somewhat dusty-looking yellow. If we had been born blind, and were suddenly endowed with sight on a piece of grass thus lighted in some parts by the sun, it would appear to us that part of the grass was green, and part a dusty yellow (very nearly of the color of primroses); and, if there were primroses near, we should think that the sunlighted grass was another mass of plants of the same sulphur-yellow color. We should try to gather some of them, and then find that the color went away from the grass when we stood between it and the sun, but not from the primroses; and by a series of experiments we should find out that the sun was really the cause of the color in the one,—not in the other. We go through such processes of experiment unconsciously in childhood; and having once come to conclusions touching the signification of certain colors, we always suppose that we *see* what we only know, and have hardly any consciousness of the real aspect of the signs we have learned to interpret. Very few people have any idea that sunlighted grass is yellow. Now, a highly accomplished artist has always reduced himself as nearly as possible to this condition of infantine sight. He sees the colors of nature exactly as they are, and therefore perceives at once in the sunlighted grass the precise relation between the two colors that form its shade and light. To him it does not seem shade and light, but bluish green barred with gold. Strive, therefore, first of all, to convince yourself of this great fact about sight. This, in your hand, which you know by experience and touch to be a book, is to your eye nothing but a patch of white, variously gradated and spotted; this other thing near you, which by experience you know to be a table, is to your eye only a patch of brown, variously darkened and veined; and so on: and the whole art of Painting consists merely in perceiving the shape and depth of these patches of color, and putting patches of the same size, depth, and shape on canvas. The only obstacle to the success of painting is, that many of the real colors are brighter and paler than it is possible to put on canvas: we must put darker ones to represent them.



Fig. 1.

7. Also, observe that before we trouble ourselves about differences of color, we must be able to lay on *one* color properly, in whatever gradations of depth and whatever shapes we want. We will try, therefore, first to lay on tints or patches of gray, of whatever depth we want, with a pointed instrument. Take any finely pointed steel pen (one of Gillott's lithographic crowquills is best), and a piece of quite smooth, but not shining, note-paper, cream laid, and get some ink that has stood already some time in the inkstand, so as to be quite black, and as thick as it can be without clogging the pen. Take a rule, and draw four straight lines, so as to inclose a square, or nearly a square, about as large as *a*, [Fig. 1](#). I say nearly a square, because it does not in the least matter whether it is quite square or not, the object being merely to get a space inclosed by straight lines.

8. Now, try to fill in that square space with crossed lines, so completely and evenly that it shall look like a square patch of gray silk or cloth, cut out and laid on the white paper, as at *b*. Cover it quickly, first with straightish lines, in any direction you like, not troubling yourself to draw them much closer or neater than those in the square *a*. Let them quite dry before retouching them. (If you draw three or four squares side by side, you may always be going on with one while the others are drying.) Then cover these lines with others in a different direction, and let those dry; then in another direction still, and let those dry. Always wait long enough to run no risk of blotting, and then draw the lines as quickly as you can. Each ought to be laid on as swiftly as the dash of the pen of a good writer; but if you try to reach this great speed at first, you will go over the edge of the square, which is a fault in this exercise. Yet it is better to do so now and then than to draw the lines very slowly; for if you do, the pen leaves a little dot of ink at the end of each line, and these dots spoil your work. So draw each line quickly, stopping always as nearly as you can at the edge of the square. The ends of lines which go over the edge are afterwards to be removed with the penknife, but not till you have done the whole work, otherwise you roughen the paper, and the next line that goes over the edge makes a blot.

9. When you have gone over the whole three or four times, you will find some parts of the square look darker than other parts. Now try to make the lighter parts as dark as the rest, so that the whole may be of equal depth or darkness. You will find, on examining the work, that where it looks darkest the lines are closest, or there are some much darker lines than elsewhere; therefore you must put in other lines, or little scratches and dots, *between* the lines in the paler parts; and where there are any very conspicuous dark lines, scratch them out lightly with the penknife, for the eye must not be attracted by any line in particular. The more carefully and delicately you fill in the little gaps and holes the better; you will get on faster by doing two or three squares perfectly than a great many badly. As the tint gets closer and begins to look even, work with very little ink in your pen, so as hardly to make any mark on the paper; and at last, where it is too dark, use the edge of your penknife very lightly, and for some time, to wear it softly into an even tone. You will find that the greatest difficulty consists in getting evenness: one bit will always look darker than another bit of your square; or there will be a granulated and sandy look over the whole. When you find your paper quite rough

and in a mess, give it up and begin another square, but do not rest satisfied till you have done your best with every square. The tint at last ought at least to be as close and even as that in *b*, [Fig. 1](#). You will find, however, that it is very difficult to get a pale tint; because, naturally, the ink lines necessary to produce a close tint at all, blacken the paper more than you want. You must get over this difficulty not so much by leaving the lines wide apart as by trying to draw them excessively fine, lightly and swiftly; being very cautious in filling in; and, at last, passing the penknife over the whole. By keeping several squares in progress at one time, and reserving your pen for the light one just when the ink is nearly exhausted, you may get on better. The paper ought, at last, to look lightly and evenly toned all over, with no lines distinctly visible.

EXERCISE II

10. As this exercise in shading is very tiresome, it will be well to vary it by proceeding with another at the same time. The power of shading rightly depends mainly on lightness of hand and keenness of sight; but there are other qualities required in drawing, dependent not merely on lightness, but steadiness of hand; and the eye, to be perfect in its power, must be made accurate as well as keen, and not only see shrewdly, but measure justly.

11. Possess yourself therefore of any cheap work on botany containing *outline* plates of leaves and flowers, it does not matter whether bad or good: Baxter's British Flowering Plants is quite good enough. Copy any of the simplest outlines, first with a soft pencil, following it, by the eye, as nearly as you can; if it does not look right in proportions, rub out and correct it, always by the eye, till you think it is right: when you have got it to your mind, lay tracing-paper on the book; on this paper trace the outline you have been copying, and apply it to your own; and having thus ascertained the faults, correct them all patiently, till you have got it as nearly accurate as may be. Work with a very soft pencil, and do not rub out so hard⁴ as to spoil the surface of your paper; never mind how dirty the paper gets, but do not roughen it; and let the false outlines alone where they do not really interfere with the true one. It is a good thing to accustom yourself to hew and shape your drawing out of a dirty piece of paper. When you have got it as right as you can, take a quill pen, not very fine at the point; rest your hand on a book about an inch and a half thick, so as to hold the pen long; and go over your pencil outline with ink, raising your pen point as seldom as possible, and never leaning more heavily on one part of the line than on another. In most outline drawings of the present day, parts of the curves are thickened to give an effect of shade; all such outlines are bad, but they will serve well enough for your exercises, provided you do not imitate this character: it is better, however, if you can, to choose a book of pure outlines. It does not in the least matter whether your pen outline be thin or thick; but it matters greatly that it should be *equal*, not heavier in one place than in another. The power to be obtained is that of drawing an even line slowly and in any direction; all dashing lines, or approximations to penmanship, are bad. The pen should, as it were, walk slowly over the ground, and you should be able at any moment to stop it, or to turn it in any other direction, like a well-managed horse.

12. As soon as you can copy every curve *slowly* and accurately, you have made satisfactory progress; but you will find the difficulty is in the slowness. It is easy to draw what appears to be a good line with a sweep of the hand, or with what is called freedom;⁵ the real difficulty and masterliness is in never letting the hand *be* free, but keeping it under entire control at every part of the line.

⁴ Stale crumb of bread is better, if you are making a delicate drawing, than india-rubber, for it disturbs the surface of the paper less: but it crumbles about the room and makes a mess; and, besides, you waste the good bread, which is wrong; and your drawing will not for a long while be worth the crumbs. So use india-rubber very lightly; or, if heavily, pressing it only, not passing it over the paper, and leave what pencil marks will not come away so, without minding them. In a finished drawing the uneffaced penciling is often serviceable, helping the general tone, and enabling you to take out little bright lights.

⁵ What is usually so much sought after under the term "freedom" is the character of the drawing of a great master in a hurry, whose

EXERCISE III

13. Meantime, you are always to be going on with your shaded squares, and chiefly with these, the outline exercises being taken up only for rest.



Fig. 2.

As soon as you find you have some command of the pen as a shading instrument, and can lay a pale or dark tint as you choose, try to produce gradated spaces like [Fig. 2](#), the dark tint passing gradually into the lighter ones. Nearly all expression of form, in drawing, depends on your power of gradating delicately; and the gradation is always most skillful which passes from one tint into another very little paler. Draw, therefore, two parallel lines for limits to your work, as in [Fig. 2](#), and try to gradate the shade evenly from white to black, passing over the greatest possible distance, yet so that every part of the band may have visible change in it. The perception of gradation is very deficient in all beginners (not to say, in many artists), and you will probably, for some time, think your gradation skillful enough, when it is quite patchy and imperfect. By getting a piece of gray shaded ribbon, and comparing it with your drawing, you may arrive, in early stages of your work, at a wholesome dissatisfaction with it. Widen your band little by little as you get more skillful, so as to give the gradation more lateral space, and accustom yourself at the same time to look for gradated spaces in Nature. The sky is the largest and the most beautiful; watch it at twilight, after the sun is down, and try to consider each pane of glass in the window you look through as a piece of paper colored blue, or gray, or purple, as it happens to be, and observe how quietly and continuously the gradation extends over the space in the window, of one or two feet square. Observe the shades on the outside and inside of a common white cup or bowl, which make it look round and hollow;⁶ and then on folds of white drapery; and thus gradually you will be led to observe the more subtle transitions of the light as it increases or declines on flat surfaces. At last, when your eye gets keen and true, you will see gradation on everything in Nature.

14. But it will not be in your power yet awhile to draw from any objects in which the gradations are varied and complicated; nor will it be a bad omen for your future progress, and for the use that art is to be made of by you, if the first thing at which you aim should be a little bit of sky. So take any narrow space of evening sky, that you can usually see, between the boughs of a tree, or between two chimneys, or through the corner of a pane in the window you like best to sit at, and try to gradate a little space of white paper as evenly as that is gradated—as *tenderly* you cannot gradate it without color, no, nor with color either; but you may do it as evenly; or, if you get impatient with your spots

hand is so thoroughly disciplined, that when pressed for time he can let it fly as it will, and it will not go far wrong. But the hand of a great master at real *work* is *never* free: its swiftest dash is under perfect government. Paul Veronese or Tintoret could pause within a hair's breadth of any appointed mark, in their fastest touches; and follow, within a hair's breadth, the previously intended curve. You must never, therefore, aim at freedom. It is not required of your drawing that it should be free, but that it should be right; in time you will be able to do right easily, and then your work will be free in the best sense; but there is no merit in doing wrong easily. These remarks, however, do not apply to the lines used in shading, which, it will be remembered, are to be made as quickly as possible. The reason of this is, that the quicker a line is drawn, the lighter it is at the ends, and therefore the more easily joined with other lines, and concealed by them; the object in perfect shading being to conceal the lines as much as possible. And observe, in this exercise, the object is more to get firmness of hand than accuracy of eye for outline; for there are no outlines in Nature, and the ordinary student is sure to draw them falsely if he draws them at all. Do not, therefore, be discouraged if you find mistakes continue to occur in your outlines; be content at present if you find your hand gaining command over the curves.

⁶ If you can get any pieces of dead white porcelain, not glazed, they will be useful models.

and lines of ink, when you look at the beauty of the sky, the sense you will have gained of that beauty is something to be thankful for. But you ought not to be impatient with your pen and ink; for all great painters, however delicate their perception of color, are fond of the peculiar effect of light which may be got in a pen-and-ink sketch, and in a wood-cut, by the gleaming of the white paper between the black lines; and if you cannot gradate well with pure black lines, you will never gradate well with pale ones. By looking at any common wood-cuts, in the cheap publications of the day, you may see how gradation is given to the sky by leaving the lines farther and farther apart; but you must make your lines as fine as you can, as well as far apart, towards the light; and do not try to make them long or straight, but let them cross irregularly in any directions easy to your hand, depending on nothing but their gradation for your effect. On this point of direction of lines, however, I shall have to tell you more, presently; in the meantime, do not trouble yourself about it.

EXERCISE IV

15. As soon as you find you can gradate tolerably with the pen, take an H. or HH. pencil, using its point to produce shade, from the darkest possible to the palest, in exactly the same manner as the pen, lightening, however, now with india-rubber instead of the penknife. You will find that all *pale* tints of shade are thus easily producible with great precision and tenderness, but that you cannot get the same dark power as with the pen and ink, and that the surface of the shade is apt to become glossy and metallic, or dirty-looking, or sandy. Persevere, however, in trying to bring it to evenness with the fine point, removing any single speck or line that may be too black, with the *point* of the knife: you must not scratch the whole with the knife as you do the ink. If you find the texture very speckled-looking, lighten it all over with india-rubber, and recover it again with sharp, and excessively fine touches of the pencil point, bringing the parts that are too pale to perfect evenness with the darker spots.

You cannot use the point too delicately or cunningly in doing this; work with it as if you were drawing the down on a butterfly's wing.

16. At this stage of your progress, if not before, you may be assured that some clever friend will come in, and hold up his hands in mocking amazement, and ask you who could set you to that "niggling;" and if you persevere in it, you will have to sustain considerable persecution from your artistical acquaintances generally, who will tell you that all good drawing depends on "boldness." But never mind them. You do not hear them tell a child, beginning music, to lay its little hand with a crash among the keys, in imitation of the great masters: yet they might, as reasonably as they may tell you to be bold in the present state of your knowledge. Bold, in the sense of being undaunted, yes; but bold in the sense of being careless, confident, or exhibitory,—no,—no, and a thousand times no; for, even if you were not a beginner, it would be bad advice that made you bold. Mischievous may easily be done quickly, but good and beautiful work is generally done slowly; you will find no boldness in the way a flower or a bird's wing is painted; and if Nature is not bold at her work, do you think you ought to be at yours? So never mind what people say, but work with your pencil point very patiently; and if you can trust me in anything, trust me when I tell you, that though there are all kinds and ways of art,—large work for large places, small work for narrow places, slow work for people who can wait, and quick work for people who cannot,—there is one quality, and, I think, only one, in which all great and good art agrees;—it is all delicate art. Coarse art is always bad art. You cannot understand this at present, because you do not know yet how much tender thought, and subtle care, the great painters put into touches that at first look coarse; but, believe me, it is true, and you will find it is so in due time.

17. You will be perhaps also troubled, in these first essays at pencil drawing, by noticing that more delicate gradations are got in an instant by a chance touch of the india-rubber, than by an hour's labor with the point; and you may wonder why I tell you to produce tints so painfully, which might, it appears, be obtained with ease. But there are two reasons: the first, that when you come to draw

forms, you must be able to gradate with absolute precision, in whatever place and direction you wish; not in any wise vaguely, as the india-rubber does it: and, secondly, that all natural shadows are more or less mingled with gleams of light. In the darkness of ground there is the light of the little pebbles or dust; in the darkness of foliage, the glitter of the leaves; in the darkness of flesh, transparency; in that of a stone, granulation: in every case there is some mingling of light, which cannot be represented by the leaden tone which you get by rubbing, or by an instrument known to artists as the "stump." When you can manage the point properly, you will indeed be able to do much also with this instrument, or with your fingers; but then you will have to retouch the flat tints afterwards, so as to put life and light into them, and that can only be done with the point. Labor on, therefore, courageously, with that only.

EXERCISE V

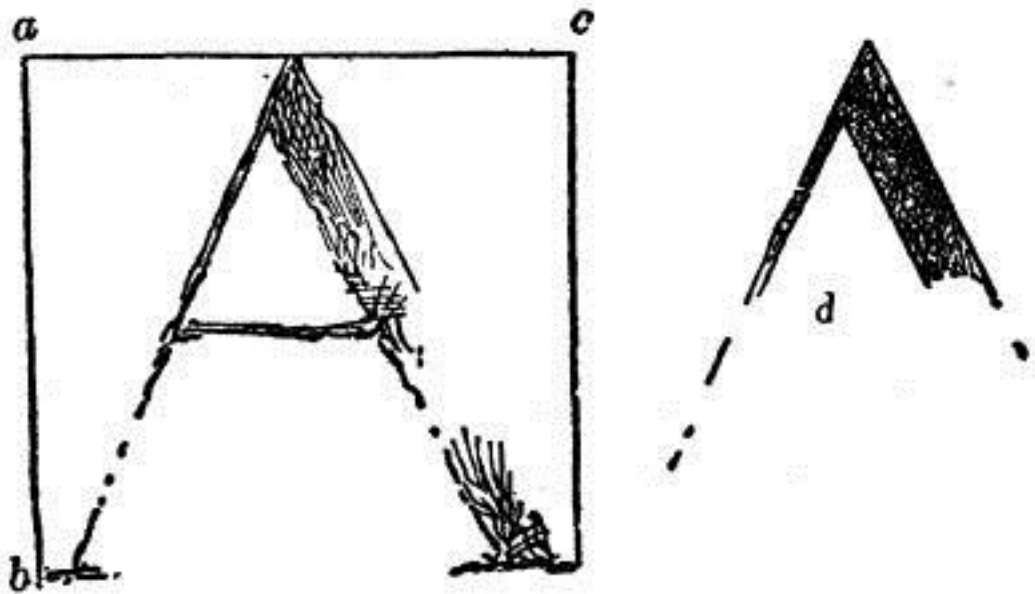


Fig. 3.

18. When you can manage to tint and gradate tenderly with the pencil point, get a good large alphabet, and try to *tint* the letters into shape with the pencil point. Do not outline them first, but measure their height and extreme breadth with the compasses, as *a b*, *a c*, [Fig. 3](#), and then scratch in their shapes gradually; the letter A, inclosed within the lines, being in what Turner would have called a "state of forwardness." Then, when you are satisfied with the shape of the letter, draw pen-and-ink lines firmly round the tint, as at *d*, and remove any touches outside the limit, first with the india-rubber, and then with the penknife, so that all may look clear and right. If you rub out any of the pencil inside the outline of the letter, retouch it, closing it up to the inked line. The straight lines of the outline are all to be ruled,⁷ but the curved lines are to be drawn by the eye and hand; and you will soon find what good practice there is in getting the curved letters, such as Bs, Cs, etc., to stand quite straight, and come into accurate form.

19. All these exercises are very irksome, and they are not to be persisted in alone; neither is it necessary to acquire perfect power in any of them. An entire master of the pencil or brush ought,

⁷ Artists who glance at this book may be surprised at this permission. My chief reason is, that I think it more necessary that the pupil's eye should be trained to accurate perception of the relations of curve and right lines, by having the latter absolutely true, than that he should practice drawing straight lines. But also, I believe, though I am not quite sure of this, that he never *ought* to be able to draw a straight line. I do not believe a perfectly trained hand ever can draw a line without some curvature in it, or some variety of direction. Prout could draw a straight line, but I do not believe Raphael could, nor Tintoret. A great draughtsman can, as far as I have observed, draw every line *but* a straight one.

indeed, to be able to draw any form at once, as Giotto his circle; but such skill as this is only to be expected of the consummate master, having pencil in hand all his life, and all day long,—hence the force of Giotto's proof of his skill; and it is quite possible to draw very beautifully, without attaining even an approximation to such a power; the main point being, not that every line should be precisely what we intend or wish, but that the line which we intended or wished to draw should be right. If we always see rightly and mean rightly, we shall get on, though the hand may stagger a little; but if we mean wrongly, or mean nothing, it does not matter how firm the hand is. Do not therefore torment yourself because you cannot do as well as you would like; but work patiently, sure that every square and letter will give you a certain increase of power; and as soon as you can draw your letters pretty well, here is a more amusing exercise for you.

EXERCISE VI

20. Choose any tree that you think pretty, which is nearly bare of leaves, and which you can see against the sky, or against a pale wall, or other light ground: it must not be against strong light, or you will find the looking at it hurt your eyes; nor must it be in sunshine, or you will be puzzled by the lights on the boughs. But the tree must be in shade; and the sky blue, or gray, or dull white. A wholly gray or rainy day is the best for this practice.

21. You will see that all the boughs of the tree are dark against the sky. Consider them as so many dark rivers, to be laid down in a map with absolute accuracy; and, without the least thought about the roundness of the stems, map them all out in flat shade, scrawling them in with pencil, just as you did the limbs of your letters; then correct and alter them, rubbing out and out again, never minding how much your paper is dirtied (only not destroying its surface), until every bough is exactly, or as near as your utmost power can bring it, right in curvature and in thickness. Look at the white interstices between them with as much scrupulousness as if they were little estates which you had to survey, and draw maps of, for some important lawsuit, involving heavy penalties if you cut the least bit of a corner off any of them, or gave the hedge anywhere too deep a curve; and try continually to fancy the whole tree nothing but a flat ramification on a white ground. Do not take any trouble about the little twigs, which look like a confused network or mist; leave them all out,⁸ drawing only the main branches as far as you can see them distinctly, your object at present being not to draw a tree, but to learn how to do so. When you have got the thing as nearly right as you can,—and it is better to make one good study, than twenty left unnecessarily inaccurate,—take your pen, and put a fine outline to all the boughs, as you did to your letter, taking care, as far as possible, to put the outline within the edge of the shade, so as not to make the boughs thicker: the main use of the outline is to affirm the whole more clearly; to do away with little accidental roughnesses and excrescences, and especially to mark where boughs cross, or come in front of each other, as at such points their arrangement in this kind of sketch is unintelligible without the outline. It may perfectly well happen that in Nature it should be less distinct than your outline will make it; but it is better in this kind of sketch to mark the facts clearly. The temptation is always to be slovenly and careless, and the outline is like a bridle, and forces our indolence into attention and precision. The outline should be about the thickness of that in [Fig. 4](#), which represents the ramification of a small stone pine, only I have not endeavored to represent the pencil shading within the outline, as I could not easily express it in a wood-cut; and you have nothing to do at present with the indication of foliage above, of which in another place. You may also draw your trees as much larger than this figure as you like; only, however large they may be, keep the outline as delicate, and draw the branches far enough into their outer

⁸ Or, if you feel able to do so, scratch them in with confused quick touches, indicating the general shape of the cloud or mist of twigs round the main branches; but do not take much trouble about them.

sprays to give quite as slender ramification as you have in this figure, otherwise you do not get good enough practice out of them.

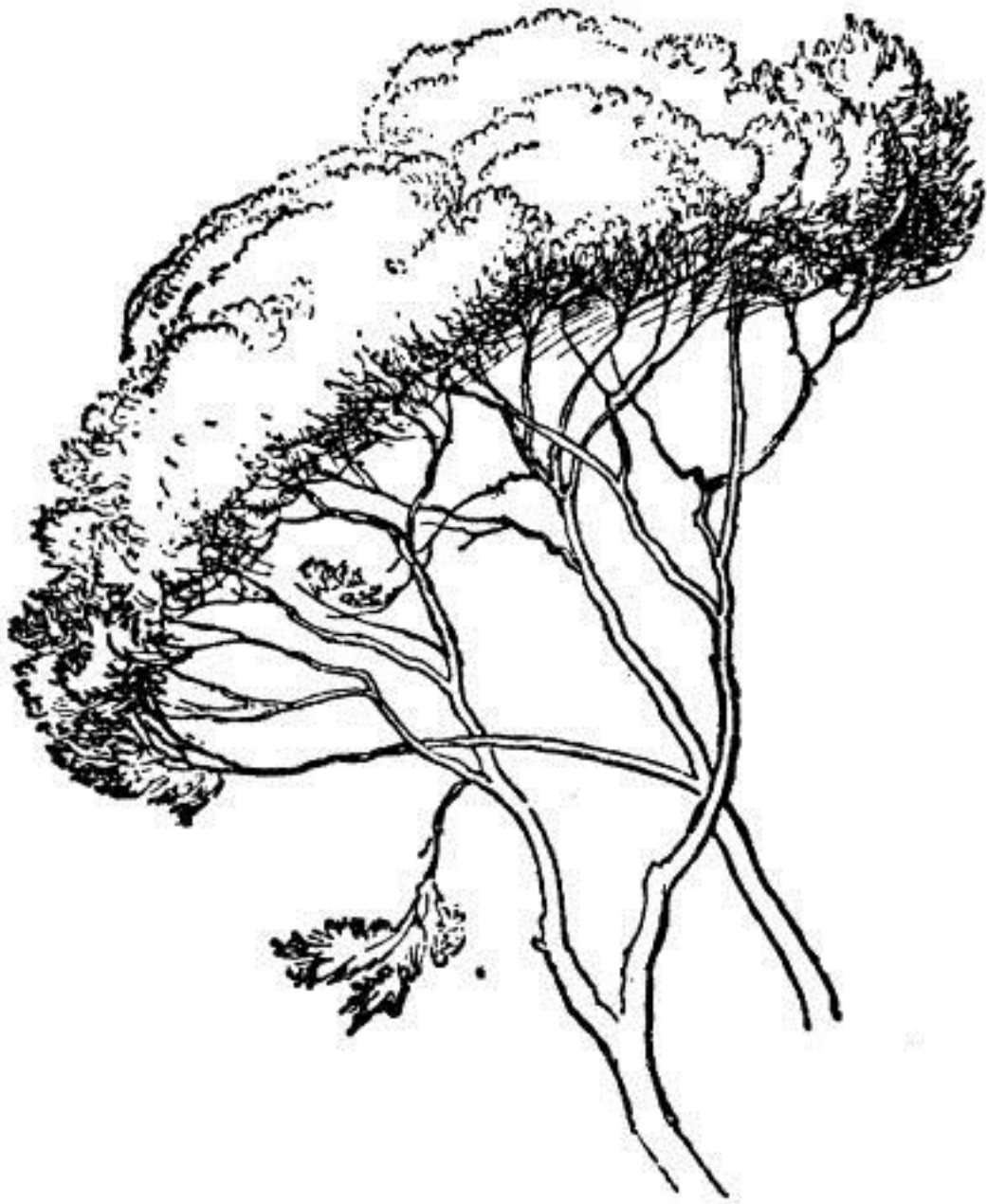


Fig. 4.

22. You cannot do too many studies of this kind: every one will give you some new notion about trees. But when you are tired of tree boughs, take any forms whatever which are drawn in flat color, one upon another; as patterns on any kind of cloth, or flat china (tiles, for instance), executed in two colors only; and practice drawing them of the right shape and size by the eye, and filling them in with shade of the depth required.

In doing this, you will first have to meet the difficulty of representing depth of color by depth of shade. Thus a pattern of ultramarine blue will have to be represented by a darker tint of gray than a pattern of yellow.

23. And now it is both time for you to begin to learn the mechanical use of the brush; and necessary for you to do so in order to provide yourself with the gradated scale of color which you

will want. If you can, by any means, get acquainted with any ordinary skillful water-color painter, and prevail on him to show you how to lay on tints with a brush, by all means do so; not that you are yet, nor for a long while yet, to begin to color, but because the brush is often more convenient than the pencil for laying on masses or tints of shade, and the sooner you know how to manage it as an instrument the better. If, however, you have no opportunity of seeing how water-color is laid on by a workman of any kind, the following directions will help you:—

EXERCISE VII

24. Get a shilling cake of Prussian blue. Dip the end of it in water so as to take up a drop, and rub it in a white saucer till you cannot rub much more, and the color gets dark, thick, and oily-looking. Put two teaspoonfuls of water to the color you have rubbed down, and mix it well up with a camel's-hair brush about three quarters of an inch long.

25. Then take a piece of smooth, but not glossy, Bristol board or pasteboard; divide it, with your pencil and rule, into squares as large as those of the very largest chess-board: they need not be perfect squares, only as nearly so as you can quickly guess. Rest the pasteboard on something sloping as much as an ordinary desk; then, dipping your brush into the color you have mixed, and taking up as much of the liquid as it will carry, begin at the top of one of the squares, and lay a pond or runlet of color along the top edge. Lead this pond of color gradually downwards, not faster at one place than another, but as if you were adding a row of bricks to a building, all along (only building down instead of up), dipping the brush frequently so as to keep the color as full in that, and in as great quantity on the paper, as you can, so only that it does not run down anywhere in a little stream. But if it should, never mind; go on quietly with your square till you have covered it all in. When you get to the bottom, the color will lodge there in a great wave. Have ready a piece of blotting-paper; dry your brush on it, and with the dry brush take up the superfluous color as you would with a sponge, till it all looks even.

26. In leading the color down, you will find your brush continually go over the edge of the square, or leave little gaps within it. Do not endeavor to retouch these, nor take much care about them; the great thing is to get the color to lie smoothly where it reaches, not in alternate blots and pale patches; try, therefore, to lead it over the square as fast as possible, with such attention to your limit as you are able to give. The use of the exercise is, indeed, to enable you finally to strike the color up to the limit with perfect accuracy; but the first thing is to get it even,—the power of rightly striking the edge comes only by time and practice: even the greatest artists rarely can do this quite perfectly.

27. When you have done one square, proceed to do another which does not communicate with it. When you have thus done all the alternate squares, as on a chess-board, turn the pasteboard upside down, begin again with the first, and put another coat over it, and so on over all the others. The use of turning the paper upside down is to neutralize the increase of darkness towards the bottom of the squares, which would otherwise take place from the ponding of the color.

28. Be resolved to use blotting-paper, or a piece of rag, instead of your lips, to dry the brush. The habit of doing so, once acquired, will save you from much partial poisoning. Take care, however, always to draw the brush from root to point, otherwise you will spoil it. You may even wipe it as you would a pen when you want it very dry, without doing harm, provided you do not crush it upwards. Get a good brush at first, and cherish it; it will serve you longer and better than many bad ones.

29. When you have done the squares all over again, do them a third time, always trying to keep your edges as neat as possible. When your color is exhausted, mix more in the same proportions, two teaspoonfuls to as much as you can grind with a drop; and when you have done the alternate squares three times over, as the paper will be getting very damp, and dry more slowly, begin on the white squares, and bring them up to the same tint in the same way. The amount of jagged dark line which then will mark the limits of the squares will be the exact measure of your unskillfulness.

30. As soon as you tire of squares draw circles (with compasses); and then draw straight lines irregularly across circles, and fill up the spaces so produced between the straight line and the circumference; and then draw any simple shapes of leaves, according to the exercise No. II., and fill up those, until you can lay on color quite evenly in any shape you want.

31. You will find in the course of this practice, as you cannot always put exactly the same quantity of water to the color, that the darker the color is, the more difficult it becomes to lay it on evenly. Therefore, when you have gained some definite degree of power, try to fill in the forms required with a full brush, and a dark tint, at once, instead of laying several coats one over another; always taking care that the tint, however dark, be quite liquid; and that, after being laid on, so much of it is absorbed as to prevent its forming a black line at the edge as it dries. A little experience will teach you how apt the color is to do this, and how to prevent it; not that it needs always to be prevented, for a great master in water-colors will sometimes draw a firm outline, when he *wants* one, simply by letting the color dry in this way at the edge.

32. When, however, you begin to cover complicated forms with the darker color, no rapidity will prevent the tint from drying irregularly as it is led on from part to part. You will then find the following method useful. Lay in the color very pale and liquid; so pale, indeed, that you can only just see where it is on the paper. Lead it up to all the outlines, and make it precise in form, keeping it thoroughly wet everywhere. Then, when it is all in shape, take the darker color, and lay some of it *into* the middle of the liquid color. It will spread gradually in a branchy kind of way, and you may now lead it up to the outlines already determined, and play it with the brush till it fills its place well; then let it dry, and it will be as flat and pure as a single dash, yet defining all the complicated forms accurately.

33. Having thus obtained the power of laying on a tolerably flat tint, you must try to lay on a graduated one. Prepare the color with three or four teaspoonfuls of water; then, when it is mixed, pour away about two-thirds of it, keeping a teaspoonful of pale color. Sloping your paper as before, draw two pencil lines all the way down, leaving a space between them of the width of a square on your chess-board. Begin at the top of your paper, between the lines; and having struck on the first brushful of color, and led it down a little, dip your brush deep in water, and mix up the color on the plate quickly with as much more water as the brush takes up at that one dip: then, with this paler color, lead the tint farther down. Dip in water again, mix the color again, and thus lead down the tint, always dipping in water once between each replenishing of the brush, and stirring the color on the plate well, but as quickly as you can. Go on until the color has become so pale that you cannot see it; then wash your brush thoroughly in water, and carry the wave down a little farther with that, and then absorb it with the dry brush, and leave it to dry.

34. If you get to the bottom of your paper before your color gets pale, you may either take longer paper, or begin, with the tint as it was when you left off, on another sheet; but be sure to exhaust it to pure whiteness at last. When all is quite dry, recommence at the top with another similar mixture of color, and go down in the same way. Then again, and then again, and so continually until the color at the top of the paper is as dark as your cake of Prussian blue, and passes down into pure white paper at the end of your column, with a perfectly smooth gradation from one into the other.

35. You will find at first that the paper gets mottled or wavy, instead of evenly graduated; this is because at some places you have taken up more water in your brush than at others, or not mixed it thoroughly on the plate, or led one tint too far before replenishing with the next. Practice only will enable you to do it well; the best artists cannot always get gradations of this kind quite to their minds; nor do they ever leave them on their pictures without after-touching.

36. As you get more power, and can strike the color more quickly down, you will be able to gradate in less compass;⁹ beginning with a small quantity of color, and adding a drop of water, instead

⁹ It is more difficult, at first, to get, in color, a narrow gradation than an extended one; but the ultimate difficulty is, as with the pen, to make the gradation go *far*.

of a brushful; with finer brushes, also, you may gradate to a less scale. But slight skill will enable you to test the relations of color to shade as far as is necessary for your immediate progress, which is to be done thus:—

37. Take cakes of lake, of gamboge, of sepia, of blue-black, of cobalt, and vermilion; and prepare gradated columns (exactly as you have done with the Prussian blue) of the lake and blue-black.¹⁰ Cut a narrow slip, all the way down, of each gradated color, and set the three slips side by side; fasten them down, and rule lines at equal distances across all the three, so as to divide them into fifty degrees, and number the degrees of each, from light to dark, 1, 2, 3, etc. If you have gradated them rightly, the darkest part either of the red or blue will be nearly equal in power to the darkest part of the blue-black, and any degree of the black slip will also, accurately enough for our purpose, balance in weight the degree similarly numbered in the red or the blue slip. Then, when you are drawing from objects of a crimson or blue color, if you can match their color by any compartment of the crimson or blue in your scales, the gray in the compartment of the gray scale marked with the same number is the gray which must represent that crimson or blue in your light and shade drawing.

38. Next, prepare scales with gamboge, cobalt, and vermilion. You will find that you cannot darken these beyond a certain point;¹¹ for yellow and scarlet, so long as they remain yellow and scarlet, cannot approach to black; we cannot have, properly speaking, a dark yellow or dark scarlet. Make your scales of full yellow, blue, and scarlet, half-way down; passing *then* gradually to white. Afterwards use lake to darken the upper half of the vermilion and gamboge; and Prussian blue to darken the cobalt. You will thus have three more scales, passing from white nearly to black, through yellow and orange, through sky-blue, and through scarlet. By mixing the gamboge and Prussian blue you may make another with green; mixing the cobalt and lake, another with violet; the sepia alone will make a forcible brown one; and so on, until you have as many scales as you like, passing from black to white through different colors. Then, supposing your scales properly gradated and equally divided, the compartment or degree No. 1 of the gray will represent in chiaroscuro the No. 1 of all the other colors; No. 2 of gray the No. 2 of the other colors, and so on.

39. It is only necessary, however, in this matter that you should understand the principle; for it would never be possible for you to gradate your scales so truly as to make them practically accurate and serviceable; and even if you could, unless you had about ten thousand scales, and were able to change them faster than ever juggler changed cards, you could not in a day measure the tints on so much as one side of a frost-bitten apple. But when once you fully understand the principle, and see how all colors contain as it were a certain quantity of darkness, or power of dark relief from white—some more, some less; and how this pitch or power of each may be represented by equivalent values of gray, you will soon be able to arrive shrewdly at an approximation by a glance of the eye, without any measuring scale at all.

40. You must now go on, again with the pen, drawing patterns, and any shapes of shade that you think pretty, as veinings in marble or tortoiseshell, spots in surfaces of shells, etc., as tenderly as you can, in the darknesses that correspond to their colors; and when you find you can do this successfully, it is time to begin rounding.

EXERCISE VIII

41. Go out into your garden, or into the road, and pick up the first round or oval stone you can find, not very white, nor very dark; and the smoother it is the better, only it must not *shine*. Draw your table near the window, and put the stone, which I will suppose is about the size of *a* in [Fig. 5](#) (it had better not be much larger), on a piece of not very white paper, on the table in front of you. Sit so

¹⁰ Of course, all the columns of color are to be of equal length.

¹¹ The degree of darkness you can reach with the given color is always indicated by the color of the solid cake in the box.

that the light may come from your left, else the shadow of the pencil point interferes with your sight of your work. You must not let the *sun* fall on the stone, but only ordinary light: therefore choose a window which the sun does not come in at. If you can shut the shutters of the other windows in the room it will be all the better; but this is not of much consequence.

42. Now if you can draw that stone, you can draw anything; I mean, anything that is drawable. Many things (sea foam, for instance) cannot be drawn at all, only the idea of them more or less suggested; but if you can draw the stone *rightly*, everything within reach of art is also within yours.

For all drawing depends, primarily, on your power of representing *Roundness*. If you can once do that, all the rest is easy and straightforward; if you cannot do that, nothing else that you may be able to do will be of any use. For Nature is all made up of roundnesses; not the roundness of perfect globes, but of variously curved surfaces. Boughs are rounded, leaves are rounded, stones are rounded, clouds are rounded, cheeks are rounded, and curls are rounded: there is no more flatness in the natural world than there is vacancy. The world itself is round, and so is all that is in it, more or less, except human work, which is often very flat indeed.

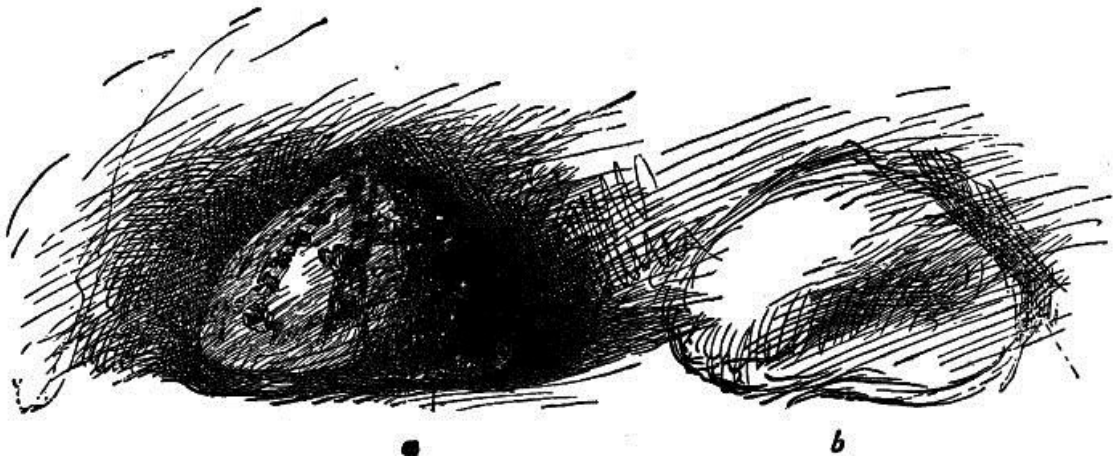


Fig. 5.

Therefore, set yourself steadily to conquer that round stone, and you have won the battle.

43. Look your stone antagonist boldly in the face. You will see that the side of it next the window is lighter than most of the paper; that the side of it farthest from the window is darker than the paper; and that the light passes into the dark gradually, while a shadow is thrown to the right on the paper itself by the stone: the general appearance of things being more or less as in *a*, [Fig. 5](#), the spots on the stone excepted, of which more presently.

44. Now, remember always what was stated in the outset, that everything you can see in Nature is seen only so far as it is lighter or darker than the things about it, or of a different color from them. It is either seen as a patch of one color on a ground of another; or as a pale thing relieved from a dark thing, or a dark thing from a pale thing. And if you can put on patches of color or shade of exactly the same size, shape, and gradations as those on the object and its ground, you will produce the appearance of the object and its ground. The best draughtsman—Titian and Paul Veronese themselves—could do no more than this; and you will soon be able to get some power of doing it in an inferior way, if you once understand the exceeding simplicity of what is to be done. Suppose you have a brown book on a white sheet of paper, on a red tablecloth. You have nothing to do but to put on spaces of red, white, and brown, in the same shape, and gradated from dark to light in the same degrees, and your drawing is done. If you will not look at what you see, if you try to put on brighter or duller colors than are there, if you try to put them on with a dash or a blot, or to cover your paper with "vigorous" lines, or to produce anything, in fact, but the plain, unaffected, and finished tranquillity of the thing before you,

you need not hope to get on. Nature will show you nothing if you set yourself up for her master. But forget yourself, and try to obey her, and you will find obedience easier and happier than you think.

45. The real difficulties are to get the refinement of the forms and the evenness of the gradations. You may depend upon it, when you are dissatisfied with your work, it is always too coarse or too uneven. It may not be wrong—in all probability is not wrong, in any (so-called) great point. But its edges are not true enough in outline; and its shades are in blotches, or scratches, or full of white holes. Get it more tender and more true, and you will find it is more powerful.

46. Do not, therefore, think your drawing must be weak because you have a finely pointed pen in your hand. Till you can draw with that, you can draw with nothing; when you can draw with that, you can draw with a log of wood charred at the end. True boldness and power are only to be gained by care. Even in fencing and dancing, all ultimate ease depends on early precision in the commencement; much more in singing or drawing.

47. Now I do not want you to copy my sketch in [Fig. 5](#), but to copy the stone before you in the way that my sketch is done. To which end, first measure the extreme length of the stone with compasses, and mark that length on your paper; then, between the points marked, leave something like the form of the stone in light, scrawling the paper all over, round it; *b*, in [Fig. 5](#), is a beginning of this kind. Rather leave too much room for the high light, than too little; and then more cautiously fill in the shade, shutting the light gradually up, and putting in the dark slowly on the dark side. You need not plague yourself about accuracy of shape, because, till you have practiced a great deal, it is impossible for you to draw the shape of the stone quite truly, and you must gradually gain correctness by means of these various exercises: what you have mainly to do at present is, to get the stone to look solid and round, not much minding what its exact contour is—only draw it as nearly right as you can without vexation; and you will get it more right by thus feeling your way to it in shade, than if you tried to draw the outline at first. For you can *see* no outline; what you see is only a certain space of gradated shade, with other such spaces about it; and those pieces of shade you are to imitate as nearly as you can, by scrawling the paper over till you get them to the right shape, with the same gradations which they have in Nature. And this is really more likely to be done well, if you have to fight your way through a little confusion in the sketch, than if you have an accurately traced outline. For instance, having sketched the fossil sea-urchin at *a*, in [Fig. 5](#), whose form, though irregular, required more care in following than that of a common stone, I was going to draw it also under another effect; reflected light bringing its dark side out from the background: but when I had laid on the first few touches I thought it would be better to stop, and let you see how I had begun it, at *b*. In which beginning it will be observed that nothing is so determined but that I can more or less modify, and add to or diminish the contour as I work on, the lines which suggest the outline being blended with the others if I do not want them; and the having to fill up the vacancies and conquer the irregularities of such a sketch will probably secure a higher completion at last, than if half an hour had been spent in getting a true outline before beginning.

48. In doing this, however, take care not to get the drawing too dark. In order to ascertain what the shades of it really are, cut a round hole, about half the size of a pea, in a piece of white paper the color of that you use to draw on. Hold this bit of paper with the hole in it, between you and your stone; and pass the paper backwards and forwards, so as to see the different portions of the stone (or other subject) through the hole. You will find that, thus, the circular hole looks like one of the patches of color you have been accustomed to match, only changing in depth as it lets different pieces of the stone be seen through it. You will be able thus actually to *match* the color of the stone at any part of it, by tinting the paper beside the circular opening. And you will find that this opening never looks quite *black*, but that all the roundings of the stone are given by subdued grays.¹²

¹² The figure *a*, [Fig. 5](#), is very dark, but this is to give an example of all kinds of depths of tint, without repeated figures.

49. You will probably find, also, that some parts of the stone, or of the paper it lies on, look luminous through the opening; so that the little circle then tells as a light spot instead of a dark spot. When this is so, you cannot imitate it, for you have no means of getting light brighter than white paper: but by holding the paper more sloped towards the light, you will find that many parts of the stone, which before looked light through the hole, then look dark through it; and if you can place the paper in such a position that every part of the stone looks slightly dark, the little hole will tell always as a spot of shade, and if your drawing is put in the same light, you can imitate or match every gradation. You will be amazed to find, under these circumstances, how slight the differences of tint are, by which, through infinite delicacy of gradation, Nature can express form.

If any part of your subject will obstinately show itself as a light through the hole, that part you need not hope to imitate. Leave it white; you can do no more.

50. When you have done the best you can to get the general form, proceed to finish, by imitating the texture and all the cracks and stains of the stone as closely as you can; and note, in doing this, that cracks or fissures of any kind, whether between stones in walls, or in the grain of timber or rocks, or in any of the thousand other conditions they present, are never expressible by single black lines, or lines of simple shadow. A crack must always have its complete system of light and shade, however small its scale. It is in reality a little ravine, with a dark or shady side, and light or sunny side, and, usually, shadow in the bottom. This is one of the instances in which it may be as well to understand the reason of the appearance; it is not often so in drawing, for the aspects of things are so subtle and confused that they cannot in general be explained; and in the endeavor to explain some, we are sure to lose sight of others, while the natural overestimate of the importance of those on which the attention is fixed causes us to exaggerate them, so that merely scientific draughtsmen caricature a third part of Nature, and miss two-thirds. The best scholar is he whose eye is so keen as to see at once how the thing looks, and who need not therefore trouble himself with any reasons why it looks so: but few people have this acuteness of perception; and to those who are destitute of it, a little pointing out of rule and reason will be a help, especially when a master is not near them. I never allow my own pupils to ask the reason of anything, because, as I watch their work, I can always show them how the thing is, and what appearance they are missing in it; but when a master is not by to direct the sight, science may, here and there, be allowed to do so in his stead.

51. Generally, then, every solid illumined object—for instance, the stone you are drawing—has a light side turned towards the light, a dark side turned away from the light, and a shadow, which is cast on something else (as by the stone on the paper it is set upon). You may sometimes be placed so as to see only the light side and shadow, sometimes only the dark side and shadow, and sometimes both or either without the shadow; but in most positions solid objects will show all the three, as the stone does here.

52. Hold up your hand with the edge of it towards you, as you sit now with your side to the window, so that the flat of your hand is turned to the window. You will see one side of your hand distinctly lighted, the other distinctly in shade. Here are light side and dark side, with no seen shadow; the shadow being detached, perhaps on the table, perhaps on the other side of the room; you need not look for it at present.

53. Take a sheet of note-paper, and holding it edgewise, as you hold your hand, wave it up and down past the side of your hand which is turned from the light, the paper being of course farther from the window. You will see, as it passes, a strong gleam of light strike on your hand, and light it considerably on its dark side. This light is *reflected* light. It is thrown back from the paper (on which it strikes first in coming from the window) to the surface of your hand, just as a ball would be if somebody threw it through the window at the wall and you caught it at the rebound.

Next, instead of the note-paper, take a red book, or a piece of scarlet cloth. You will see that the gleam of light falling on your hand, as you wave the book, is now reddened. Take a blue book,

and you will find the gleam is blue. Thus every object will cast some of its own color back in the light that it reflects.

54. Now it is not only these books or papers that reflect light to your hand: every object in the room on that side of it reflects some, but more feebly, and the colors mixing all together form a neutral¹³ light, which lets the color of your hand itself be more distinctly seen than that of any object which reflects light to it; but if there were no reflected light, that side of your hand would look as black as a coal.

55. Objects are seen therefore, in general, partly by direct light, and partly by light reflected from the objects around them, or from the atmosphere and clouds. The color of their light sides depends much on that of the direct light, and that of the dark sides on the colors of the objects near them. It is therefore impossible to say beforehand what color an object will have at any point of its surface, that color depending partly on its own tint, and partly on infinite combinations of rays reflected from other things. The only certain fact about dark sides is, that their color will be changeful, and that a picture which gives them merely darker shades of the color of the light sides must assuredly be bad.

56. Now, lay your hand flat on the white paper you are drawing on. You will see one side of each finger lighted, one side dark, and the shadow of your hand on the paper. Here, therefore, are the three divisions of shade seen at once. And although the paper is white, and your hand of a rosy color somewhat darker than white, yet you will see that the shadow all along, just under the finger which casts it, is darker than the flesh, and is of a very deep gray. The reason of this is, that much light is reflected from the paper to the dark side of your finger, but very little is reflected from other things to the paper itself in that chink under your finger.

57. In general, for this reason, a shadow, or, at any rate, the part of the shadow nearest the object, is darker than the dark side of the object. I say in general, because a thousand accidents may interfere to prevent its being so. Take a little bit of glass, as a wine-glass, or the ink-bottle, and play it about a little on the side of your hand farthest from the window; you will presently find you are throwing gleams of light all over the dark side of your hand, and in some positions of the glass the reflection from it will annihilate the shadow altogether, and you will see your hand dark on the white paper. Now a stupid painter would represent, for instance, a drinking-glass beside the hand of one of his figures, and because he had been taught by rule that "shadow was darker than the dark side," he would never think of the reflection from the glass, but paint a dark gray under the hand, just as if no glass were there. But a great painter would be sure to think of the true effect, and paint it; and then comes the stupid critic, and wonders why the hand is so light on its dark side.

58. Thus it is always dangerous to assert anything as a *rule* in matters of art; yet it is useful for you to remember that, in a general way, a shadow is darker than the dark side of the thing that casts it, supposing the colors otherwise the same; that is to say, when a white object casts a shadow on a white surface, or a dark object on a dark surface: the rule will not hold if the colors are different, the shadow of a black object on a white surface being, of course, not so dark, usually, as the black thing casting it. The only way to ascertain the ultimate truth in such matters is to *look* for it; but, in the meantime, you will be helped by noticing that the cracks in the stone are little ravines, on one side of which the light strikes sharply, while the other is in shade. This dark side usually casts a little darker shadow at the bottom of the crack; and the general tone of the stone surface is not so bright as the light bank of the ravine. And, therefore, if you get the surface of the object of a uniform tint, more or less indicative of shade, and then scratch out a white spot or streak in it of any shape; by putting a dark touch beside this white one, you may turn it, as you choose, into either a ridge or an incision, into either a boss or a cavity. If you put the dark touch on the side of it nearest the sun, or rather, nearest

¹³ Nearly neutral in ordinary circumstances, but yet with quite different tones in its neutrality, according to the colors of the various reflected rays that compose it.

the place that the light comes from, you will make it a cut or cavity; if you put it on the opposite side, you will make it a ridge or mound; and the complete success of the effect depends less on depth of shade than on the rightness of the drawing; that is to say, on the evident correspondence of the form of the shadow with the form that casts it. In drawing rocks, or wood, or anything irregularly shaped, you will gain far more by a little patience in following the forms carefully, though with slight touches, than by labored finishing of texture of surface and transparencies of shadow.

59. When you have got the whole well into shape, proceed to lay on the stains and spots with great care, quite as much as you gave to the forms. Very often, spots or bars of local color do more to express form than even the light and shade, and they are always interesting as the means by which Nature carries light into her shadows, and shade into her lights; an art of which we shall have more to say hereafter, in speaking of composition. *a*, in [Fig. 5](#), is a rough sketch of a fossil sea-urchin, in which the projections of the shell are of black flint, coming through a chalky surface. These projections form dark spots in the light; and their sides, rising out of the shadow, form smaller whiter spots in the dark. You may take such scattered lights as these out with the penknife, provided you are just as careful to place them rightly as if you got them by a more laborious process.

60. When you have once got the feeling of the way in which gradation expresses roundness and projection, you may try your strength on anything natural or artificial that happens to take your fancy, provided it be not too complicated in form. I have asked you to draw a stone first, because any irregularities and failures in your shading will be less offensive to you, as being partly characteristic of the rough stone surface, than they would be in a more delicate subject; and you may as well go on drawing rounded stones of different shapes for a little while, till you find you can really shade delicately. You may then take up folds of thick white drapery, a napkin or towel thrown carelessly on the table is as good as anything, and try to express them in the same way; only now you will find that your shades must be wrought with perfect unity and tenderness, or you will lose the flow of the folds. Always remember that a little bit perfected is worth more than many scrawls; whenever you feel yourself inclined to scrawl, give up work resolutely, and do not go back to it till next day. Of course your towel or napkin must be put on something that may be locked up, so that its folds shall not be disturbed till you have finished. If you find that the folds will not look right, get a photograph of a piece of drapery (there are plenty now to be bought, taken from the sculpture of the cathedrals of Rheims, Amiens, and Chartres, which will at once educate your hand and your taste), and copy some piece of that; you will then ascertain what it is that is wanting in your studies from Nature, whether more gradation, or greater watchfulness of the disposition of the folds. Probably for some time you will find yourself failing painfully in both, for drapery is very difficult to follow in its sweeps; but do not lose courage, for the greater the difficulty, the greater the gain in the effort. If your eye is more just in measurement of form than delicate in perception of tint, a pattern on the folded surface will help you. Try whether it does or not: and if the patterned drapery confuses you, keep for a time to the simple white one; but if it helps you, continue to choose patterned stuffs (tartans and simple checkered designs are better at first than flowered ones), and even though it should confuse you, begin pretty soon to use a pattern occasionally, copying all the distortions and perspective modifications of it among the folds with scrupulous care.

61. Neither must you suppose yourself condescending in doing this. The greatest masters are always fond of drawing patterns; and the greater they are, the more pains they take to do it truly.¹⁴ Nor can there be better practice at any time, as introductory to the nobler complication of natural detail. For when you can draw the spots which follow the folds of a printed stuff, you will have some chance of following the spots which fall into the folds of the skin of a leopard as he leaps; but if you

¹⁴ If we had any business with the reasons of this, I might perhaps be able to show you some metaphysical ones for the enjoyment, by truly artistical minds, of the changes wrought by light and shade and perspective in patterned surfaces; but this is at present not to the point; and all that you need to know is that the drawing of such things is good exercise, and moreover a kind of exercise which Titian, Veronese, Tintoret, Giorgione, and Turner, all enjoyed, and strove to excel in.

cannot draw the manufacture, assuredly you will never be able to draw the creature. So the cloudings on a piece of wood, carefully drawn, will be the best introduction to the drawing of the clouds of the sky, or the waves of the sea; and the dead leaf-patterns on a damask drapery, well rendered, will enable you to disentangle masterfully the living leaf-patterns of a thorn thicket or a violet bank.

62. Observe, however, in drawing any stuffs, or bindings of books, or other finely textured substances, do not trouble yourself, as yet, much about the wooliness or gauziness of the thing; but get it right in shade and fold, and true in pattern. We shall see, in the course of after-practice, how the penned lines may be made indicative of texture; but at present attend only to the light and shade and pattern. You will be puzzled at first by *lustrous* surfaces, but a little attention will show you that the expression of these depends merely on the right drawing of their light and shade, and reflections. Put a small black japanned tray on the table in front of some books; and you will see it reflects the objects beyond it as in a little black rippled pond; its own color mingling always with that of the reflected objects. Draw these reflections of the books properly, making them dark and distorted, as you will see that they are, and you will find that this gives the luster to your tray. It is not well, however, to draw polished objects in general practice; only you should do one or two in order to understand the aspect of any lustrous portion of other things, such as you cannot avoid; the gold, for instance, on the edges of books, or the shining of silk and damask, in which lies a great part of the expression of their folds. Observe also that there are very few things which are totally without luster; you will frequently find a light which puzzles you, on some apparently dull surface, to be the dim image of another object.

63. And now, as soon as you can conscientiously assure me that with the point of the pen or pencil you can lay on any form and shade you like, I give you leave to use the brush with one color, —sepia, or blue black, or mixed cobalt and blue black, or neutral tint; and this will much facilitate your study, and refresh you. But, preliminary, you must do one or two more exercises in tinting.

EXERCISE IX

64. Prepare your color as directed for Exercise VII. Take a brush full of it, and strike it on the paper in any irregular shape; as the brush gets dry, sweep the surface of the paper with it as if you were dusting the paper very lightly; every such sweep of the brush will leave a number of more or less minute interstices in the color. The lighter and faster every dash the better. Then leave the whole to dry; and, as soon as it is dry, with little color in your brush, so that you can bring it to a fine point, fill up all the little interstices one by one, so as to make the whole as even as you can, and fill in the larger gaps with more color, always trying to let the edges of the first and of the newly applied color exactly meet, and not lap over each other. When your new color dries, you will find it in places a little paler than the first. Retouch it therefore, trying to get the whole to look quite one piece. A very small bit of color thus filled up with your very best care, and brought to look as if it had been quite even from the first, will give you better practice and more skill than a great deal filled in carelessly; so do it with your best patience, not leaving the most minute spot of white; and do not fill in the large pieces first and then go to the small, but quietly and steadily cover in the whole up to a marked limit; then advance a little farther, and so on; thus always seeing distinctly what is done and what undone.

EXERCISE X

65. Lay a coat of the blue, prepared as usual, over a whole square of paper. Let it dry. Then another coat over four fifths of the square, or thereabouts, leaving the edge rather irregular than straight, and let it dry. Then another coat over three fifths; another over two fifths; and the last over one fifth; so that the square may present the appearance of gradual increase in darkness in five bands, each darker than the one beyond it. Then, with the brush rather dry (as in the former exercise, when filling up the interstices), try, with small touches, like those used in the pen etching, only a little

broadly, to add shade delicately beyond each edge, so as to lead the darker tints into the paler ones imperceptibly. By touching the paper very lightly, and putting a multitude of little touches, crossing and recrossing in every direction, you will gradually be able to work up to the darker tints, outside of each, so as quite to efface their edges, and unite them tenderly with the next tint. The whole square, when done, should look evenly shaded from dark to pale, with no bars, only a crossing texture of touches, something like chopped straw, over the whole.¹⁵

66. Next, take your rounded pebble; arrange it in any light and shade you like; outline it very loosely with the pencil. Put on a wash of color, prepared *very* pale, quite flat over all of it, except the highest light, leaving the edge of your color quite sharp. Then another wash, extending only over the darker parts, leaving the edge of that sharp also, as in tinting the square. Then another wash over the still darker parts, and another over the darkest, leaving each edge to dry sharp. Then, with the small touches, efface the edges, reinforce the darks, and work the whole delicately together as you would with the pen, till you have got it to the likeness of the true light and shade. You will find that the tint underneath is a great help, and that you can now get effects much more subtle and complete than with the pen merely.

67. The use of leaving the edges always sharp is that you may not trouble or vex the color, but let it lie as it falls suddenly on the paper: color looks much more lovely when it has been laid on with a dash of the brush, and left to dry in its own way, than when it has been dragged about and disturbed; so that it is always better to let the edges and forms be a little wrong, even if one cannot correct them afterwards, than to lose this fresh quality of the tint. Very great masters in water color can lay on the true forms at once with a dash, and bad masters in water color lay on grossly false forms with a dash, and leave them false; for people in general, not knowing false from true, are as much pleased with the appearance of power in the irregular blot as with the presence of power in the determined one; but *we*, in our beginnings, must do as much as we can with the broad dash, and then correct with the point, till we are quite right. We must take care to be right, at whatever cost of pains; and then gradually we shall find we can be right with freedom.

68. I have hitherto limited you to color mixed with two or three teaspoonfuls of water; but, in finishing your light and shade from the stone, you may, as you efface the edge of the palest coat towards the light, use the color for the small touches with more and more water, till it is so pale as not to be perceptible. Thus you may obtain a perfect gradation to the light. And in reinforcing the darks, when they are very dark, you may use less and less water. If you take the color tolerably dark on your brush, only always liquid (not pasty), and dash away the superfluous color on blotting paper, you will find that, touching the paper very lightly with the dry brush, you can, by repeated touches, produce a dusty kind of bloom, very valuable in giving depth to shadow; but it requires great patience and delicacy of hand to do this properly. You will find much of this kind of work in the grounds and shadows of William Hunt's drawings.¹⁶

69. As you get used to the brush and color, you will gradually find out their ways for yourself, and get the management of them. And you will often save yourself much discouragement by remembering what I have so often asserted,—that if anything goes wrong, it is nearly sure to be refinement that is wanting, not force; and connection, not alteration. If you dislike the state your drawing is in, do not lose patience with it, nor dash at it, nor alter its plan, nor rub it desperately out, at the place you think wrong; but look if there are no shadows you can graduate more perfectly; no little gaps and rents you can fill; no forms you can more delicately define: and do not *rush* at any of the errors or incompleteness thus discerned, but efface or supply slowly, and you will soon find your drawing take another look. A very useful expedient in producing some effects, is to wet the paper,

¹⁵ The use of acquiring this habit of execution is that you may be able, when you begin to color, to let one hue be seen in minute portions, gleaming between the touches of another.

¹⁶ William Hunt, of the Old Water-color Society.

and then lay the color on it, more or less wet, according to the effect you want. You will soon see how prettily it gradates itself as it dries; when dry, you can reinforce it with delicate stippling when you want it darker. Also, while the color is still damp on the paper, by drying your brush thoroughly, and touching the color with the brush so dried, you may take out soft lights with great tenderness and precision. Try all sorts of experiments of this kind, noticing how the color behaves; but remembering always that your final results must be obtained, and can only be obtained, by pure work with the point, as much as in the pen drawing.

70. You will find also, as you deal with more and more complicated subjects, that Nature's resources in light and shade are so much richer than yours, that you cannot possibly get all, or anything like all, the gradations of shadow in any given group. When this is the case, determine first to keep the broad masses of things distinct: if, for instance, there is a green book, and a white piece of paper, and a black inkstand in the group, be sure to keep the white paper as a light mass, the green book as a middle tint mass, the black inkstand as a dark mass; and do not shade the folds in the paper, or corners of the book, so as to equal in depth the darkness of the inkstand. The great difference between the masters of light and shade, and imperfect artists, is the power of the former to draw so delicately as to express form in a dark-colored object with little light, and in a light-colored object with little darkness; and it is better even to leave the forms here and there unsatisfactorily rendered than to lose the general relations of the great masses. And this, observe, not because masses are grand or desirable things in your composition (for with composition at present you have nothing whatever to do), but because it is a fact that things do so present themselves to the eyes of men, and that we see paper, book, and inkstand as three separate things, before we see the wrinkles, or chinks, or corners of any of the three. Understand, therefore, at once, that no detail can be as strongly expressed in drawing as it is in reality; and strive to keep all your shadows and marks and minor markings on the masses, lighter than they appear to be in Nature; you are sure otherwise to get them too dark. You will in doing this find that you cannot get the projection of things sufficiently shown; but never mind that; there is no need that they should appear to project, but great need that their relations of shade to each other should be preserved. All deceptive projection is obtained by partial exaggeration of shadow; and whenever you see it, you may be sure the drawing is more or less bad: a thoroughly fine drawing or painting will always show a slight tendency towards flatness.

71. Observe, on the other hand, that, however white an object may be, there is always some small point of it whiter than the rest. You must therefore have a slight tone of gray over everything in your picture except on the extreme high lights; even the piece of white paper, in your subject, must be toned slightly down, unless (and there are thousand chances against its being so) it should all be turned so as fully to front the light. By examining the treatment of the white objects in any pictures accessible to you by Paul Veronese or Titian, you will soon understand this.¹⁷

72. As soon as you feel yourself capable of expressing with the brush the undulations of surfaces and the relations of masses, you may proceed to draw more complicated and beautiful things.¹⁸ And first, the boughs of trees, now not in mere dark relief, but in full rounding. Take the first bit of branch or stump that comes to hand, with a fork in it; cut off the ends of the forking branches, so as to leave the whole only about a foot in length; get a piece of paper the same size, fix your bit of branch in some place where its position will not be altered, and draw it thoroughly, in all its light and shade, full

¹⁷ At Marlborough House, [in 1857] among the four principal examples of Turner's later water-color drawing, perhaps the most neglected was that of fishing-boats and fish at sunset. It is one of his most wonderful works, though unfinished. If you examine the larger white fishing-boat sail, you will find it has a little spark of pure white in its right-hand upper corner, about as large as a minute pin's head, and that all the surface of the sail is gradated to that focus. Try to copy this sail once or twice, and you will begin to understand Turner's work. Similarly, the wing of the Cupid in Correggio's large picture in the National Gallery is focused to two little grains of white at the top of it. The points of light on the white flower in the wreath round the head of the dancing child-faun, in Titian's Bacchus and Ariadne, exemplify the same thing.

¹⁸ I shall not henceforward number the exercises recommended; as they are distinguished only by increasing difficulty of subject, not by difference of method.

size; striving, above all things, to get an accurate expression of its structure at the fork of the branch. When once you have mastered the tree at its *armpits*, you will have little more trouble with it.

73. Always draw whatever the background happens to be, exactly as you see it. Wherever you have fastened the bough, you must draw whatever is behind it, ugly or not, else you will never know whether the light and shade are right; they may appear quite wrong to you, only for want of the background. And this general law is to be observed in all your studies: whatever you draw, draw completely and unalteringly, else you never know if what you have done is right, or whether you *could* have done it rightly had you tried. There is nothing *visible* out of which you may not get useful practice.

74. Next, to put the leaves on your boughs. Gather a small twig with four or five leaves on it, put it into water, put a sheet of light-colored or white paper behind it, so that all the leaves may be relieved in dark from the white field; then sketch in their dark shape carefully with pencil as you did the complicated boughs, in order to be sure that all their masses and interstices are right in shape before you begin shading, and complete as far as you can with pen and ink, in the manner of [Fig. 6](#)

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