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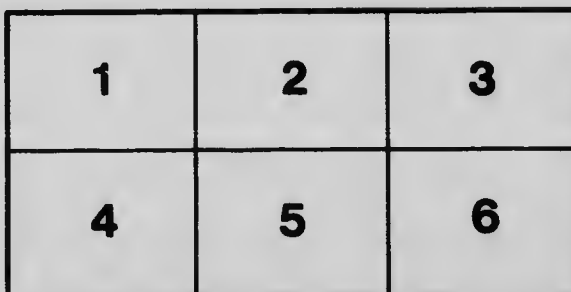
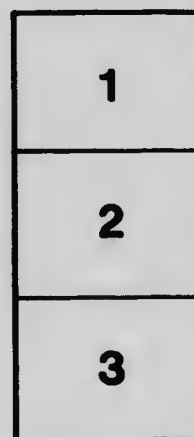
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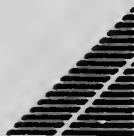
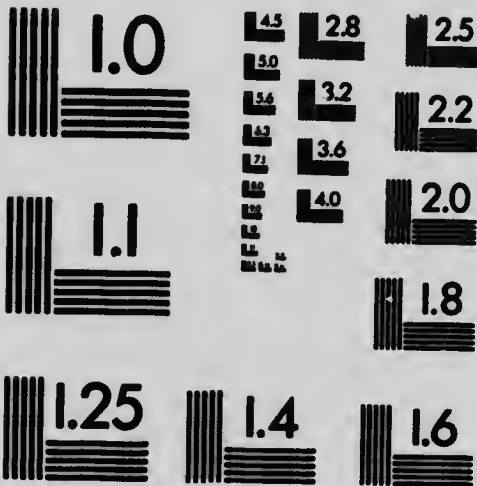
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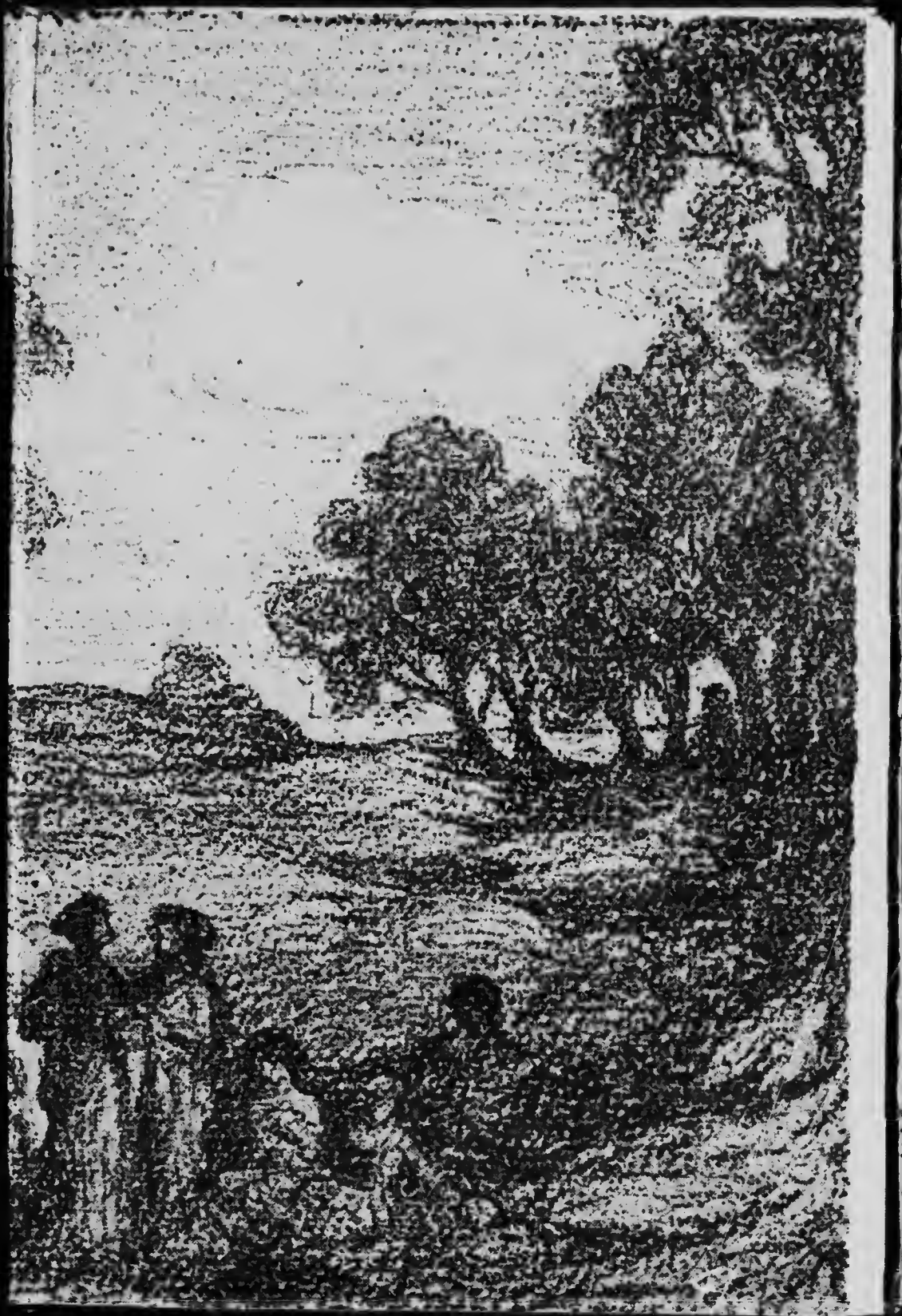


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TITIAN



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Portrait of a Man
After Titian

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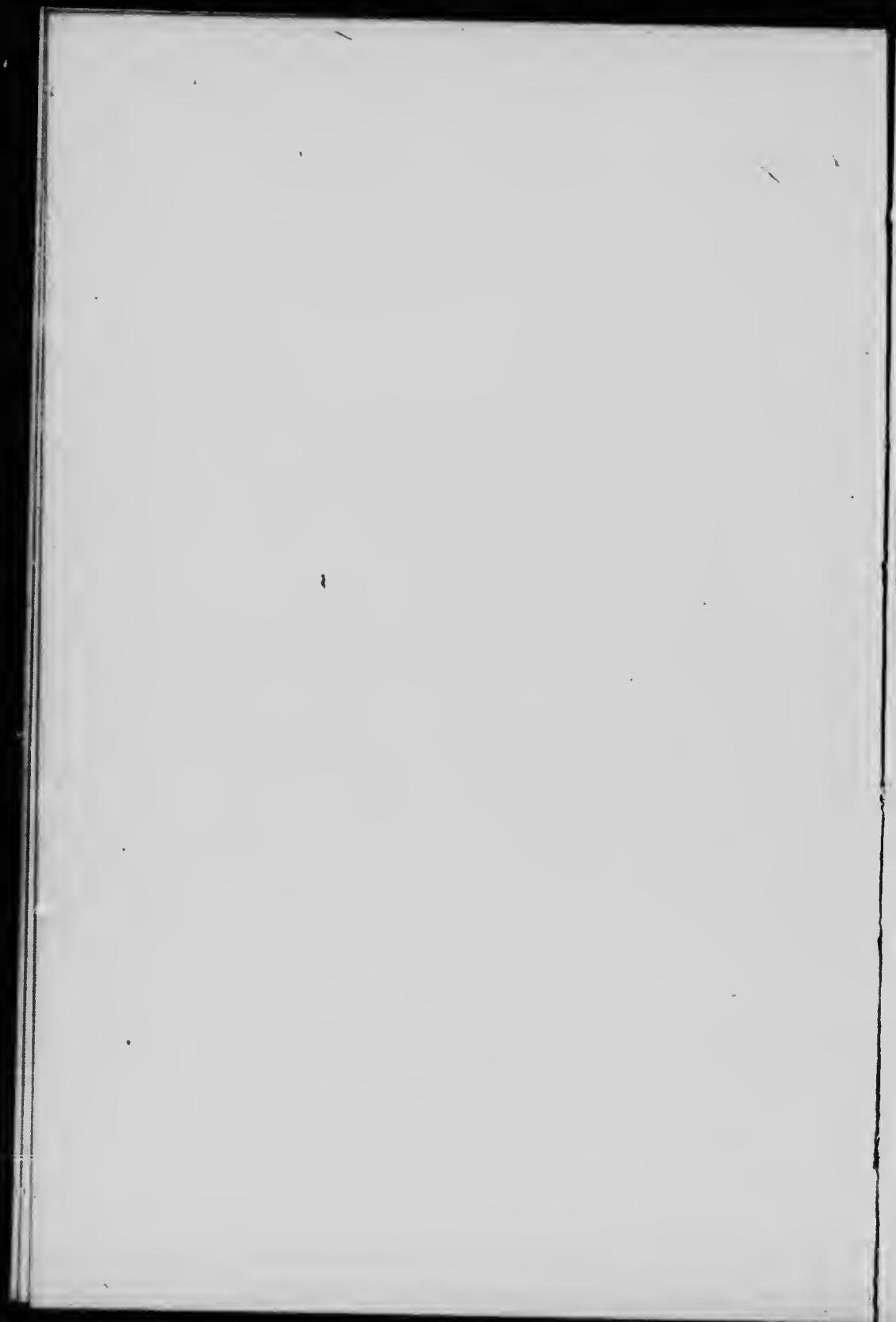
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PREFATORY NOTE

TIZIANO VECELLI, usually known as Titian, was born about 1477, at Pieve among the mountains of Cadore in Italy. He studied mainly under the celebrated brothers Bellini : one of his fellow-pupils being Giorgione. But Giorgione, the only man who could have rivalled him, dying early, Titian became the supreme and recognised master of Venetian art. He held the office of painter-in-chief to the Doges of Venice : and his life, so far as is known of it, was one long success,—a triumphal procession of ninety-nine years, filled with noble achievements. When Titian died, in 1576, “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” To his industry of labour, majesty of composition, and glory of colour, his innumerable works have borne witness for centuries : and in him the great Venetian school of painting reached its final and consummate height.

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In the following excerpts from the writings of John Ruskin (mainly adduced from *Modern Painters*) this magnificent artist receives full measure of appreciation : and his peculiar excellencies, as displayed in many of his most famous pictures, are dwelt upon in critical detail.

**TITIAN'S
SUPREMACY**

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WE cannot say that a painter is great because he paints boldly, or paints delicately ; because he generalizes or particularises ; because he loves detail, or because he disdains it. He is great if, by any of these means, he has laid open noble truths, or aroused noble emotions. It does not matter whether he paint the petal of a rose, or the chasms of a precipice, so that Love and Admiration attend him as he labours, and wait for ever upon his work. It does not matter whether he toil for months upon a few inches of his canvas, or cover a palace front with colour in a day, so only that it be with a solemn purpose that he has filled his heart with patience, or urged his hand to haste. And it does not matter whether he seek for his subjects among peasants or nobles, among the heroic or the simple, in courts or in fields, so only that he behold all things with a thirst for beauty, and a hatred of meanness and vice.

Titian's *supremacy* above all the other Venetians, except Tintoret and Veronese, consists in the firm truth of his portraiture, and more or less masterly understanding of the nature of stones, trees, men, or whatever else he took in hand to paint ; so that, without some correlative understanding in the spectator, Titian's work, in its highest qualities, must be utterly dead and unappealing to him.



Not only is there but one way of *doing* things rightly, but there is only one way of *seeing* them, and that is, seeing the whole of them, without any choice, or more intense perception of one point than another, owing to our special idiosyncrasies. Thus, when Titian or Tintoret look at a human being, they see at a glance the whole of its nature, outside and in ; all that it has of form, of colour, of passion, or of thought ; saintliness, and

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loveliness ; fleshly body, and spiritual power ; grace, or strength, or softness, or whatsoever other quality, those men will see to the full, and so paint, that when narrower people come to look at what they have done, every one may, if he chooses, find his own special pleasure in the work. The sensualist will find sensuality in Titian ; the thinker will find thought ; the saint, sanctity ; the colourist, colour ; the anatomist, form ; and yet the picture will never be a popular one in the full sense, for none of these narrower people will find their special taste so alone consulted, as that the qualities which would ensure their gratification shall be sifted or separated from others ; they are checked by the presence of the other qualities which ensure the gratification of other men. Thus, Titian is not soft enough for the sensualist,—Correggio suits him better ; Titian is not defined enough for the formalist,—Leonardo suits him better ;

Titian is not pure enough for the religionist,—Raphael suits him better ; Titian is not polite enough for the man of the world,—Vandyke suits him better ; Titian is not forcible enough for the lover of the picturesque,—Rembrandt suits him better. So Correggio is popular with a certain set, and Vandyke with a certain set, and Rembrandt with a certain set. All are great men, but of inferior stamp, and therefore Vandyke is popular, and Rembrandt is popular, but nobody cares much at heart about Titian ; only there is a strange undercurrent of everlasting murmur about his name, which means the deep consent of all great men that he is greater than they—the consent of those who, having sat long enough at his feet, have found in that restrained harmony of his strength there are indeed depths of each balanced power more wonderful than all those separate manifestations in inferior painters ; that there is a softness more

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exquisite than Correggio's, a purity loftier than Leonardo's, a force mightier than Rembrandt's, a sanctity more solemn even than Raphael's.

**TITIAN'S
COLOUR**

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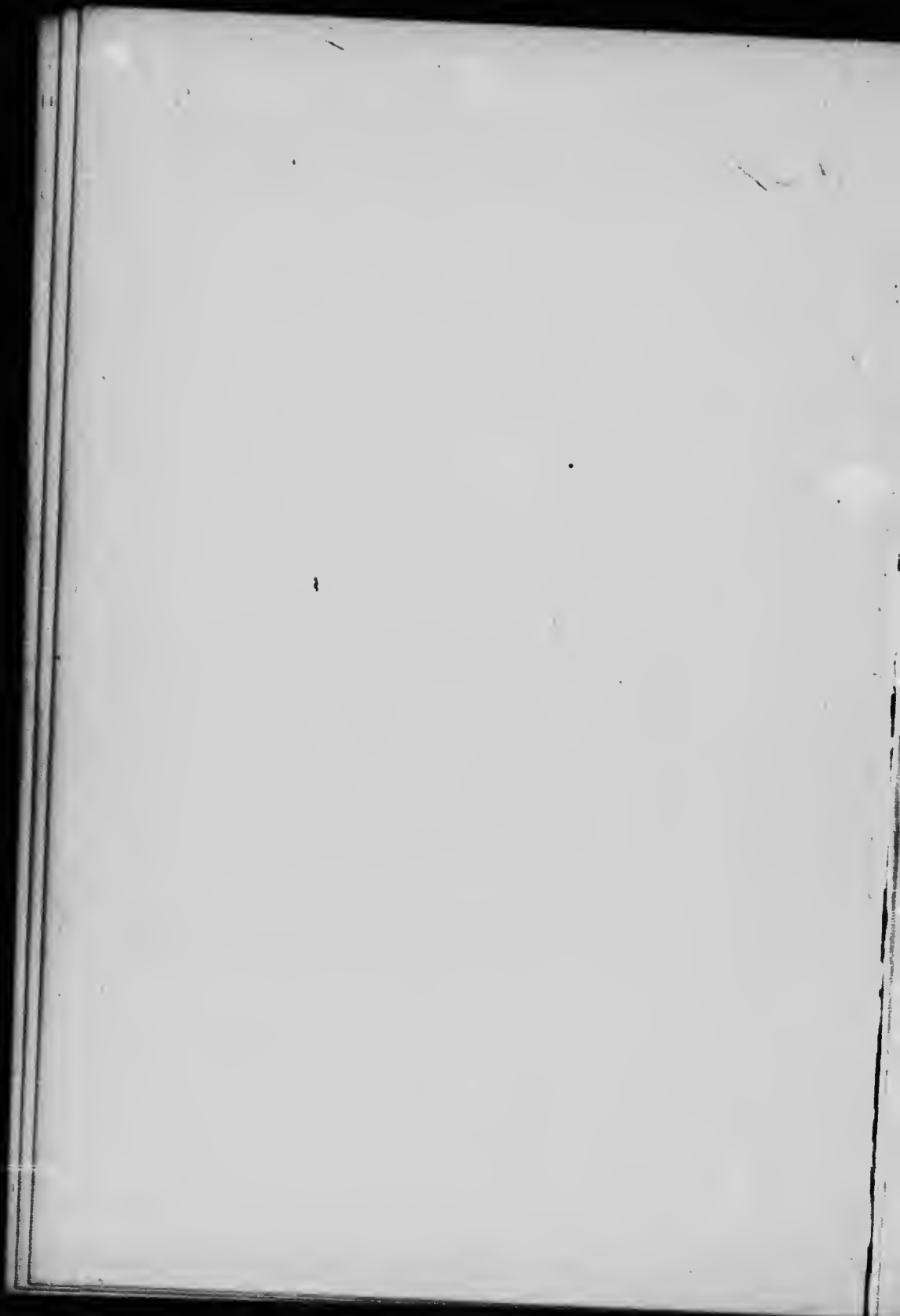
TO colour perfectly is the rarest and most precious (technical) power an artist can possess. There have only been seven supreme colourists among the true painters whose works exist (namely, Giorgione, Titian, Veronese, Tintoret, Correggio, Reynolds, and Turner). . . . It will be found ultimately that the *perfect* gifts of colour and form always go together. Titian's form is nobler than Durer's, and more subtle. . . . As long as you are working with form only, you may amuse yourself with fancies ; but colour is sacred—in that you must keep to facts. . . . Even Tintoret had to sacrifice some of the highest qualities of his colour before he could give way to the flights of wayward though mighty imagination, in which his mind rises or declines from the royal calm of Titian.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The beauty or the truth of Titian's



Flora
After Titian



flesh-tint may be appreciated by all ; but it is only to the artist, whose multiplied hours of toil have not reached the slightest resemblance of one of its tones, that its *excellence* is manifest.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

I think nature mixes yellow with almost every one of her hues, never, or very rarely, using red without it, but frequently using yellow with scarcely any red ; and I believe it will be in consequence found that her favourite opposition, that which generally characterises and gives tone to her colour, is yellow and black, passing, as it retires, into white and blue And in Titian, though there is a far greater tendency to the purple than in Rubens, I believe no red is ever mixed with the pure blue, or glazed over it, which has not in it a modifying quantity of yellow.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

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In the Bacchus and Ariadne of Titian, it is difficult to imagine anything more magnificently impossible than the blue of the distant landscape. . . . So again, in the exquisite and inimitable little bit of colour, the Europa in the Dulwich Gallery; the blue of the dark promontory on the left is thoroughly absurd and impossible, and the warm tones of the clouds equally so, unless it were sunset; but the blue especially, because it is nearer than several points of land which are equally in shadow, and yet are rendered in warm grey. But the whole value and tone of the picture would be destroyed if this blue were altered.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

We find the greatest artists mainly divided into two groups,—those who paint principally with respect to local colour, headed by Paul Veronese, Titian, and Turner; and those who paint principally with reference to light

and shade irrespective of colour, headed by Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, and Raphael. The main difference is, that with Leonardo, Rembrandt, and Raphael, vast masses of the picture are lost in comparatively colourless (dark grey or brown) shadow; these painters *beginning* with the *lights*, and going *down* to blackness; but with Veronese, Titian, and Turner, the whole picture is like the rose, glowing with colour in the shadows, and rising into paler and more delicate hues, or masses of whiteness, in the lights; they having *begun* with the *shadows* and gone up *to* whiteness.



Colour, without form, is less frequently obtainable; and it may be doubted whether it be desirable: yet I think that to the full enjoyment of it, a certain abandonment of form is necessary sometimes by flatness of mass, as often Giorgione and Titian.

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How far it is possible for the painter to represent those mountains of Shelley as the poet sees them, "mingling *their flames* with twilight," I cannot say; but my impression is, that there is no true abstract mode of considering colour: and that all the loss of form in the works of Titian and Turner, is not ideal, but the representation of the natural conditions under which bright colour is seen; for form is always in a measure lost by nature herself when colour is very vivid.



**TITIAN'S
LANDSCAPE**

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ALL landscape grandeur vanishes before that of Titian and Tintoret; and this is true of whatever these two giants touched;—but they touched little. A few level flakes of chestnut foliage; a blue abstraction of hill forms from Cadore or the Euganeans; a grand mass or two of glowing round and mighty herbage, and a few burning fields of quiet cloud were all they needed; there is evidence of Tintoret's having felt more than this, but it occurs only in secondary fragments of rock, cloud, or pine, hardly noticed among the accumulated interest of his human subject. From the window of Titian's house at Venice, the chain of the Tyrolese Alps is seen lifted in spectral power above the tufted plain of Treviso; every dawn that reddens the towers of Murano lights also a line of pyramidal fires along that colossal ridge; but there is, so far as I know, no evidence in any of the master's works of his ever having

beheld, much less felt, the majesty of their burning.



While men of serious mind, especially those whose pursuits have brought them into continued relations with the peopled rather than the lonely world, will always look to the Venetian painters as having touched those simple chords of landscape harmony which are most in unison with earnest and melancholy feeling; those whose philosophy is more cheerful and more extended, as having been trained and coloured among simple and solitary nature, will seek for a wider and more systematic circle of teaching: they may grant that the barred horizontal gloom of the Titian sky, and the massy leaves of the Titian forest, are among the most sublime of the conceivable forms of material things; but they know that the virtue of these very forms is to be learned only by right comparison

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of them with the cheerfulness, fulness, and comparative unquietness of other hours and scenes; that they are not intended for the continual food, but the occasional soothing of the human heart.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

All the landscape of Nicolo Poussin is imaginative, but the development of the power in Tintoret and Titian is so unapproachably intense that the mind unwillingly rests elsewhere. The four landscapes which occur to me as the most magnificently characteristic are: first, the Flight into Egypt, of the Scuola di San Rocco (Tintoret); secondly, the Titian of the Camuccini collection at Rome, with the figures by John Bellini; thirdly, Titian's St. Jerome, in the Brera Gallery at Milan; and fourthly, the S. Pietro Martire, which I name last, in spite of its importance, because there is something unmeaning and unworthy of Titian

about the undulation of the trunks.
. . . . From the habit of drawing
the figure, he admits too much flac-
idity and bend, and sometimes makes
his tree-trunks look flexible like sea-
weed.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The landscape above mentioned of
Titian's St. Jerome may, for aught I
know, be a pure transcript of a rocky
slope covered with chestnuts among
his native mountains. It has all the
look of a sketch from nature; if it be
not, the imagination developed in it is
of the highest order; if it be, the
imagination has only acted in the sug-
gestion of the dark sky, of the shape
of the flakes of solemn cloud, and of
the gleam of russet light along the
distant ground.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

In the St. Jerome . . . there is a
superb example of the modes in which

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the objects of landscape may be either suggested or elaborated according to their place and claim. The larger features of the ground, foliage, and drapery, as well as the lion in the lower angle, are executed with a slightness which admits not of close examination, and which, if not in shade, would be offensive to the generality of observers. But on the rock above the lion, where it turns towards the light, and where the eye is intended to dwell, there is a wreath of ivy of which every leaf is separately drawn with the greatest accuracy and care, and beside it a lizard studied with equal earnestness, yet always with that right grandeur of manner to which I have alluded.



**TITIAN'S
TREES**

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WE should naturally have expected that Titian and Correggio, living in the midst of the levels of the lagoons, and of the plain of Lombardy, would also have expressed, in their backgrounds, some pleasure in such level scenery and of the sweet free spaces of sky through which rose and fell, to them, the coloured rays of the morning and evening, associated, of course, with the sublimity of the far-away Apennine, Euganean, or Alp. But not a whit. The plains of mulberry and maize, of sea and shoal, by which they were surrounded, never occur in their backgrounds but in cases of necessity ; and both of them, in all their important landscapes, bury themselves in wild wood, Titian, wherever the choice of a scene was in his power, retiring to the narrow glens and forests of Cadore. The formality of mediæval art is, by Titian, entirely abandoned, and the old conception of the aspen grove and

meadow done away with for ever. We are now far from cities: the painter takes true delight in the desert; the trees grow wild and free.



It is observable that foliage in which the leaves are concentrically grouped, as in the chestnuts, and many shrubs, rhododendrons, for instance is far nobler in its effects than any other, so that the sweet chestnut, of all trees, most fondly and frequently occurs in the landscape of Tintoret and Titian.



For three hundred years back, trees have been drawn with affection by all the civilized nations of Europe, and yet I repeat boldly, what I before asserted, that no man but Titian and Turner ever drew the stem of a tree.



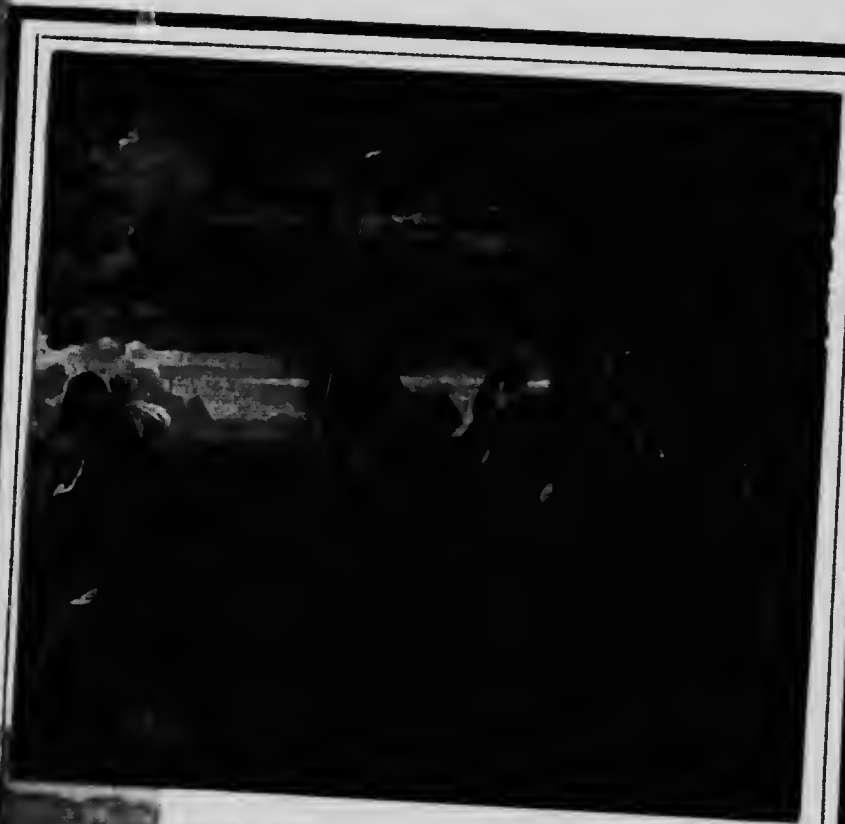
If you can paint *one* leaf, you can

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paint the world. These pre-Raphaelite laws, which you think so light, lay stern on the strength of Apelles and Zeuxis; put Titian to thoughtful trouble; are unrelaxed yet, and unrelaxable for ever. Paint a leaf indeed! Above-named Titian has done it: Correggio, moreover, and Giorgione: and Leonardo, very nearly, trying hard!



Even Titian does not foreshorten his boughs rightly. Of course he could, if he had cared to do so; for if you can foreshorten a limb or a hand, much more a tree branch. But either he had never looked at a tree carefully enough to feel that it was necessary, or, which is more likely, he disliked to introduce any background element of vigorous projection. Be the reason what it may, if you take the Lefèvre's plates of the Peter Martyr and St. Jerome—the only ones I know which

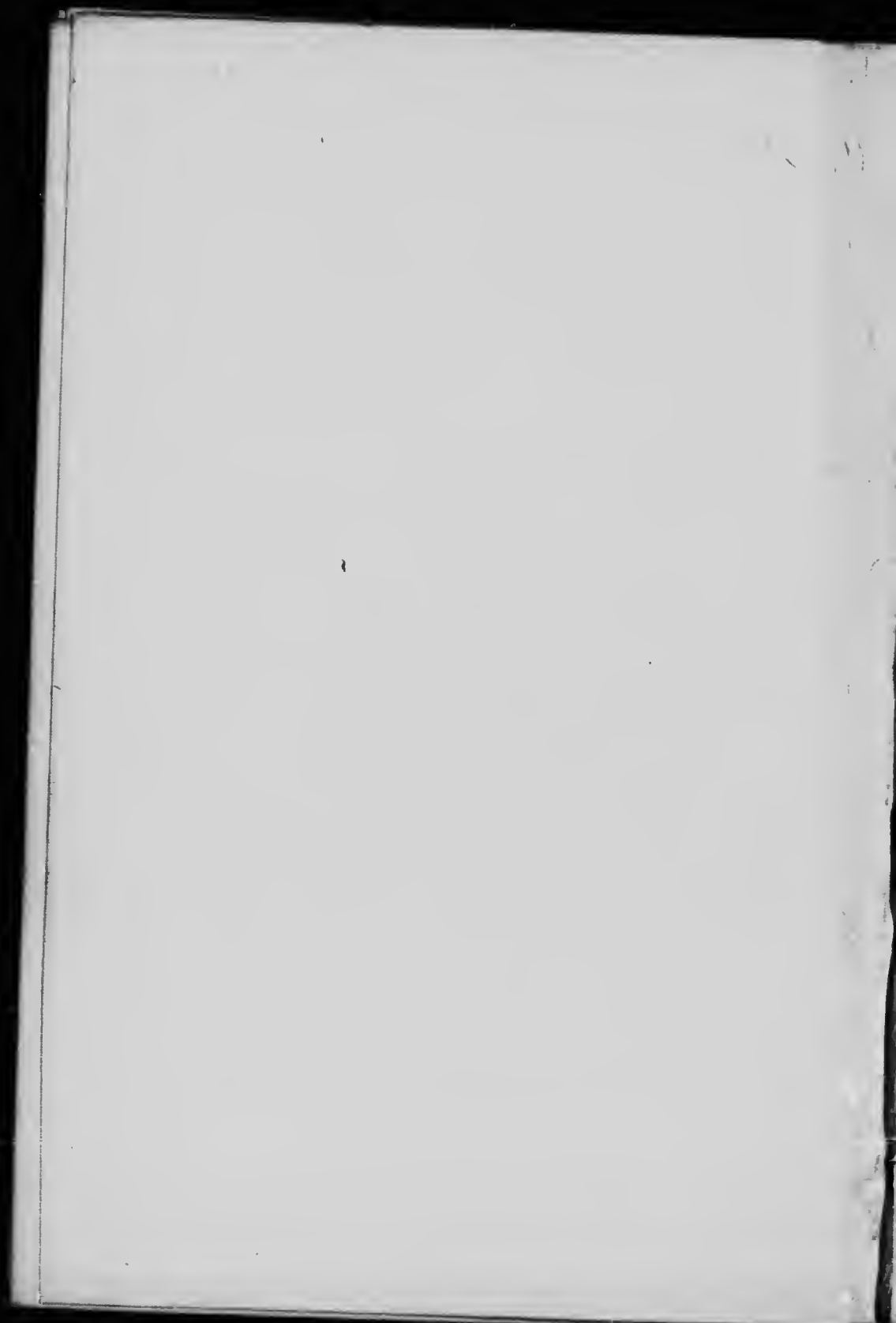


Bacchus and Ariadne
After Titian

give any idea of Titian's tree-drawing, you will observe at once that the boughs lie in flakes, artificially set to the right and left, and are not intricate or varied, even where the foliage indicates some foreshortening.



As in the classical landscape, nearly all rural labour is banished from the Titianesque. . . . the customary Venetian background is without sign of laborious rural life.



**TITIAN'S
MOUNTAINS**

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NEARLY all the genuine religious painters use *steep mountain distances*. All the merely artistical ones, or those of intermediate power, in proportion as they lose the religious element, use flat or simply architectural distances. . . . The relative depths of feeling in Tintoret, Titian and Veronese, are precisely measurable by their affection to mountains. Tintoret, though born in Venice, yet, because capable of the greatest reaches of feeling, is the first of the old painters who ever drew mountain detail rightly: Titian, though born in Cadore, and recurring to it constantly, yet being more worldly-minded, uses his hills somewhat more conventionally, though still in his most deeply felt pictures, such as the St. Jerome in the Brera, giving to the rocks and forests a consummate nobleness.

**TITIAN'S
ARCHITECTURE**

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THE great group of Venetian painters who brought landscape art, for that time, to its culminating point, have left little that is instructive in architectural painting. The causes of this I cannot comprehend, for neither Titian nor Tintoret appears to despise anything that affords them either variety of form or of colour. . . . So that it might have been expected that in the rich colours of St. Mark's, and the magnificent and fantastic masses of the Byzantine palaces, they would have found where upon to dwell with delighted elaboration. This is, however, never the case, and although frequently compelled to introduce portions of Venetian locality in their backgrounds, such portions are always treated in a most hasty and faithless manner, missing frequently all character of the building, and never advanced to realisation. In Titian's picture of Faith, the view of Venice below is laid in so rapidly and slightly, the

houses all leaning this way and that, and of no colour, the sea a dead grey-green, and the ship-sails mere dashes of the brush, that the most obscure of Turner's Venices would look substantial beside it. . . . If, however, these men laid architecture little under contribution to their own art, they made their own art a glorious gift to architecture, and the walls of Venice, which before, I believe, had received colour only in arabesque patterns, were lighted with human life by Giorgione, Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese.

TITIAN'S
SUNLIGHT
ANL SKY

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IT is always to be remembered that Titian hardly ever paints sunshine, but a certain opalescent twilight which has as much of human emotion as of imitative truth in it,

“The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o’er man’s mortality:”

and that art of this kind must always be liable to some appearance of failure when compared with a less pathetic statement of facts. . . . Those easily understood effects of afternoon light, gracious and sweet so far as they reach, are produced by the softly warm or yellow rays of the sun falling through mist. They are low in tone, even in nature, and disguise the colours of objects. They are inimitable, even by people who have little or no gift of colour. . . . But they never could be painted by great colourists. The fact of blue and crimson being effaced by yellow and gray, puts such effect at once out of the notice or thought

of a colourist, unless he had some special interest in the motive of it. You might as well ask a musician to compose with only three notes, as Titian to paint without crimson and blue.



In Carpaccio, John Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, Veronese and Tintoret, the preciousness of the luminous sky, so far as it might be at all consistent with their subject, is nearly constant; abandoned altogether in portraiture only, seldom even there, and never with advantage.

**TITIAN'S
MUNDANE
CHARACTER**

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THE pure white light and delicate hue of the idealists are carefully to be distinguished from the golden light and deep pitched hue of the school of Titian, whose virtue is the grandeur of earthly solemnity, not the glory of heavenly rejoicing. . . . There is no religion in any work of Titian's; there is not even the smallest evidence of religious temper or sympathies either in himself, or in those for whom he painted. His larger sacred subjects are merely themes for the exhibition of pictorial rhetoric,—composition and colour. His minor works are generally made subordinate to purposes of portraiture. The Madonna in the Church of the Frari is a mere lay figure introduced to form a link of connection between the portraits of various members of the Pesaro family who surround her.

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

The Assumption is a noble picture,



The Madonna of the Cherries
After Titian

because Titian believed in the Madonna. But he did not paint it to make anyone else believe in her. He painted it, because he enjoyed rich masses of red and blue, and faces flushed with sunlight.



In this I was mistaken ;—the religion of Titian is like that of Shakspeare—occult behind his magnificent equity. It is not possible, however, within the limits of this work, to give any just account of the mind of Titian : nor shall I attempt it ; but will only explain some of those more strange and apparently inconsistent attributes of it, which might otherwise prevent the reader from getting clue to its real tone.

**TITIAN'S
CLASSICAL
SUBJECTS**

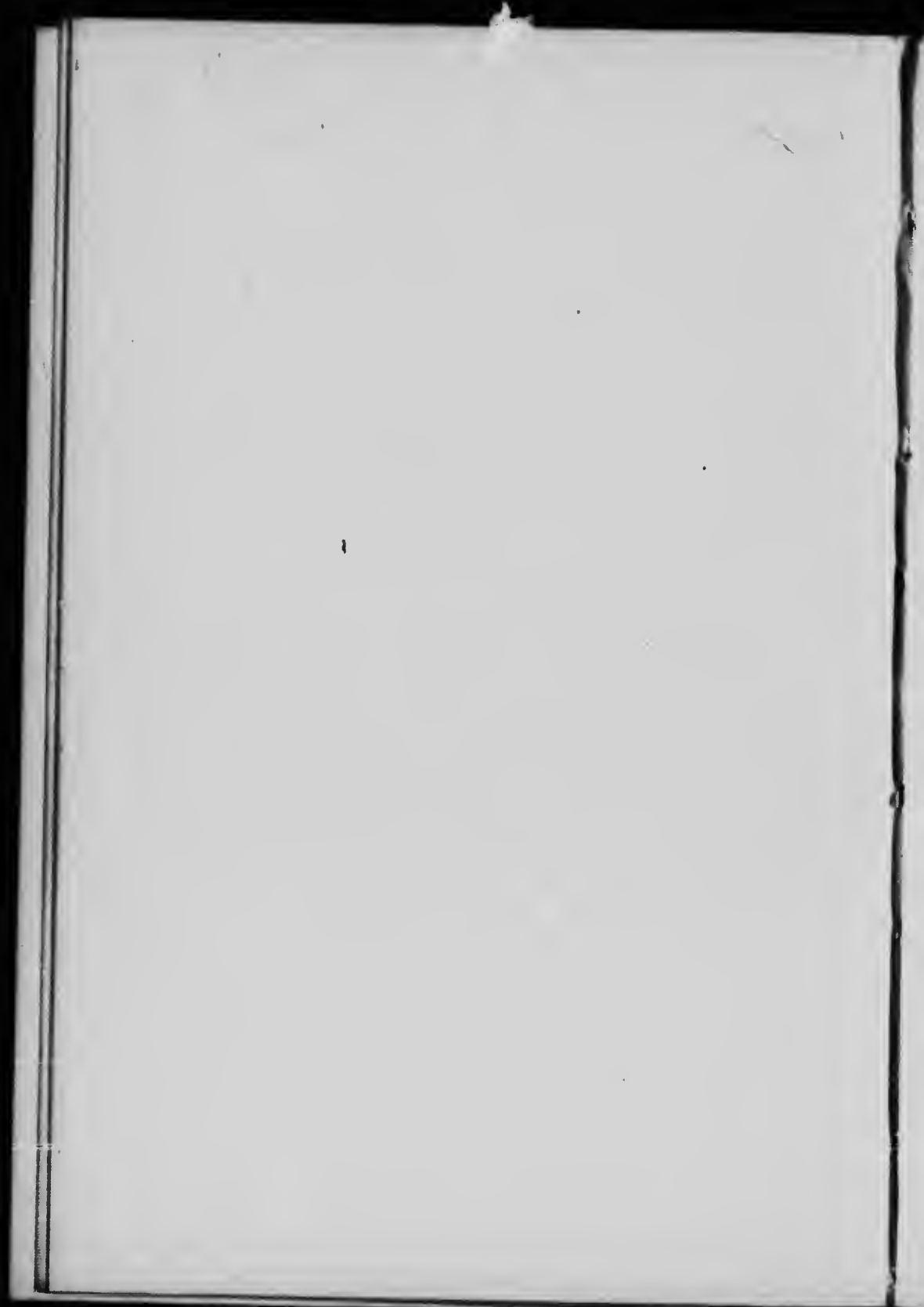
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PERHAPS when you see one of Titian's splendidly passionate subjects, or find Veronese making the Marriage in Cana one blaze of worldly pomp, you imagine that Titian must have been a sensualist, and Veronese an unbeliever. Put the idea from you at once, and be assured of this for ever;—it will guide you through many a labyrinth of life, as well as of painting,—that of an evil tree, men never gather good fruit—good of any sort or kind. . . . It may perhaps appear more difficult to account for the alternative of Titian's great religious pictures with others devoted wholly to exulting and bright representations of heathen deities. On examination, however, it will be found that these deities are never painted with any heart-reverence or affection. They are introduced for the most part symbolically (Bacchus and Venus oftenest, as incarnations of the spirit of revelry and beauty) of course always conceived with deep

imaginative truth, much resembling the mode of Keats's conception.



The Venetian mind . . . and Titian's especially, as the central type of it, was wholly realist, universal, and manly. . . . He thought that every feeling of the mind and heart, as well as every form of the body, deserved painting. Also to a painter's true and highly trained instinct, the human body is the loveliest of all objects. I do not stay to trace the reasons why, at Venice, the female body could be found in more perfect beauty than the male; but so it was, and it became the principal subject, therefore, both with Giorgione and Titian.



**TITIAN'S
SACRED
PICTURES.**

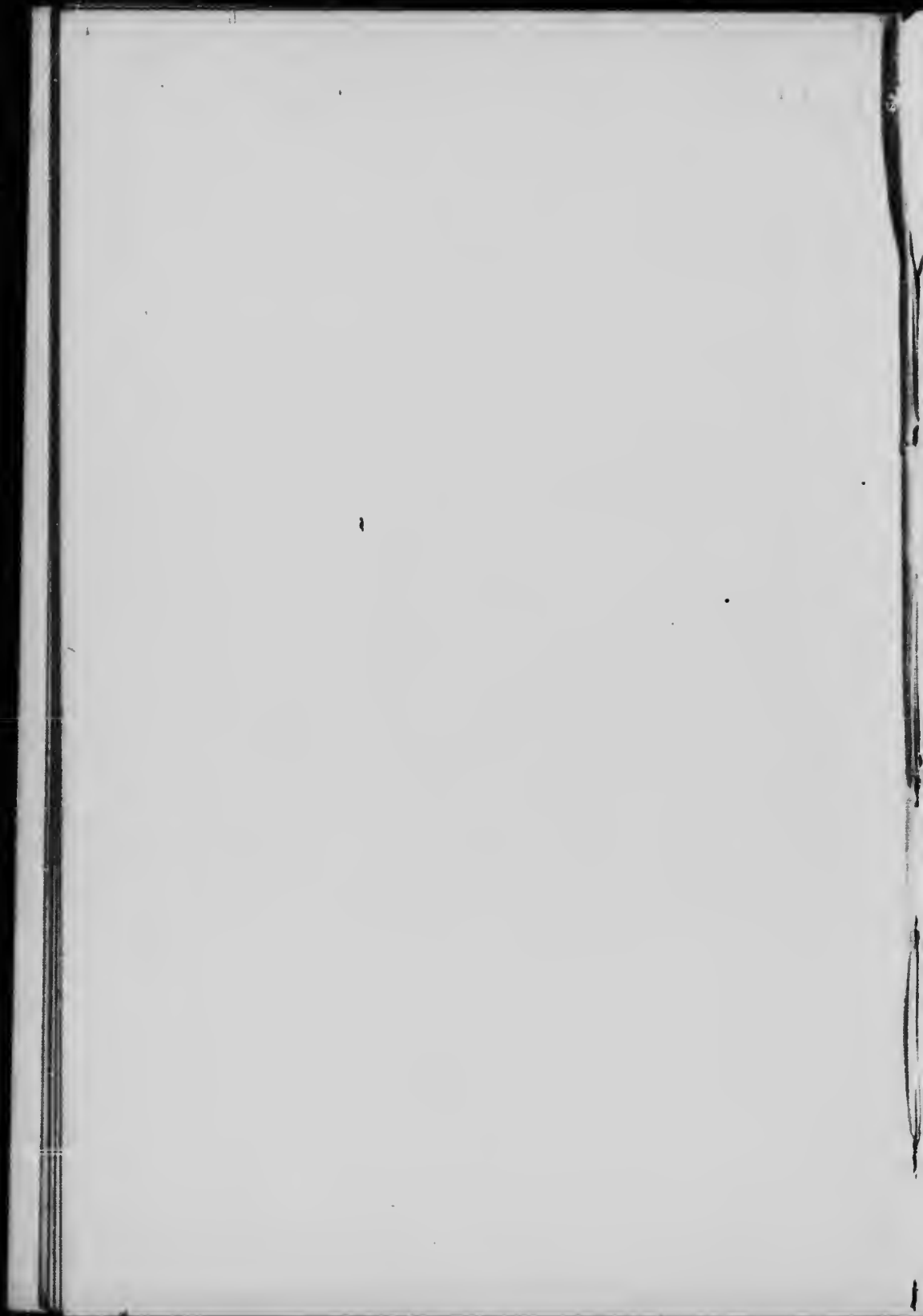
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FOR one profane picture by great Venetians, you will find ten of sacred subjects; and those, also, including their grandest, most laboured, and most beloved works. Tintoret's power culminates in two great religious pictures. . . . Titian's in the Assumption, the Peter Martyr, and Presentation of the Virgin.



Titian's Magdalen in the Pitti Palace. . . . A stout, redfaced woman, dull, and coarse of feature, with much of the animal in even her expression of repentance—her eyes strained, and inflamed with weeping. I ought, however, to have remembered another picture of the Magdalen by Titian (Mr. Rogers's, now in the National Gallery) in which she is just as refined, as in the Pitti Palace she is gross; and had I done so, I should have seen Titian's meaning. It had been the fashion before his time to

make the Magdalen always young and beautiful; her, if no one else, even the rudest painters flattered; her repentance was not thought perfect unless she had lustrous hair and lovely lips. Titian first dared to doubt the romantic fable, and reject the narrowness of sentimental faith. He saw that it was possible for plain women to love no less vividly than beautiful ones; and for stout persons to repent, as well as those more delicately made. It seemed to him that the Magdalen would have received her pardon not the less quickly because her wit was none of the readiest; and would not have been regarded with less compassion by her Master because her eyes were swollen, or her dress disordered. It is just because he has set himself sternly to enforce this lesson that the picture is so painful.



**TITIAN'S
FLOWERS**

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THE great masters of Italy, almost without exception, and Titian perhaps more than any (for he had the highest knowledge of landscape), are in the constant habit of rendering every detail of their foregrounds with the most laborious botanical fidelity—witness the Bacchus and Ariadne, in which the foreground is occupied by the common blue iris, the aquilegia, and the wild rose; *every stamen* of which latter is given, while the blossoms and leaves of the columbine (a difficult flower to draw) have been studied with the most exquisite accuracy.



There may be as much greatness of mind, as much nobility of manner, in a master's treatment of the smallest features, as in his management of the most vast; and this greatness of manner chiefly consists in seizing the specific character of the object, to-

gether with all the great qualities of beauty which it has in common with higher orders of existence, while he utterly rejects the meaner beauties which are accidentally peculiar to the object, and yet not specifically characteristic of it. I cannot give a better instance than the painting of the flowers in Titian's picture above mentioned. While every stamen of the rose is given, because this was necessary to mark the flower, and while the curves and large characters of the leaves are rendered with exquisite fidelity, there is no vestige of particular texture, of moss, bloom, moisture, or any other accident, no dewdrops, nor flies, nor trickeries of any kind; nothing beyond the simple forms and hues of the flowers, even those hues themselves being simplified and broadly rendered. The varieties of aquilegia have, in reality, a greyish and uncertain tone of colour; and I believe never attain the intense purity of blue with

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which Titian has gifted his flower. But the master does not aim at the particular colour of individual blossoms; he seizes the type of all, and gives it with the utmost purity and simplicity of which colour is capable.



Titian in his early work sometimes carries a blossom or two out with affection, as the columbines in our Bacchus and Ariadne. . . . But in his later and mightier work, Titian will only paint a fan or a wristband intensely, never a flower. In his portrait of Lavinia, at Berlin, the roses are just touched finely enough to fill their place, with no affection whatever, and with the most subdued red possible; while in the later portrait of her at Dresden, there are no roses at all.

**TITIAN'S
RIGHTNESS**

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YOU know that Velasquez was sent by Philip of Spain, to Italy, to buy pictures for him. He went all over Italy, saw the living artists there, and all their best pictures when freshly painted, so that he had every opportunity of judging; and never was a man so capable of judging. He went to Rome and ordered various works of living artists; and while there, he was one day asked by Salvator Rosa what he thought of Raphael. His reply, and the ensuing conversation, are thus reported by Boschini, in curious Italian verse, which, thus translated by Dr. Donaldson, is quoted in Mr. Stirling's "Life of Velasquez":—

"The master" [Velasquez] "stiffly bowed his figure tall

And said, 'For Rafael, to speak the truth—

I always was plain-spoken from my youth—
I cannot say I like his works at all.'

"'Well,' said the other" [Salvator], "'If you can run down

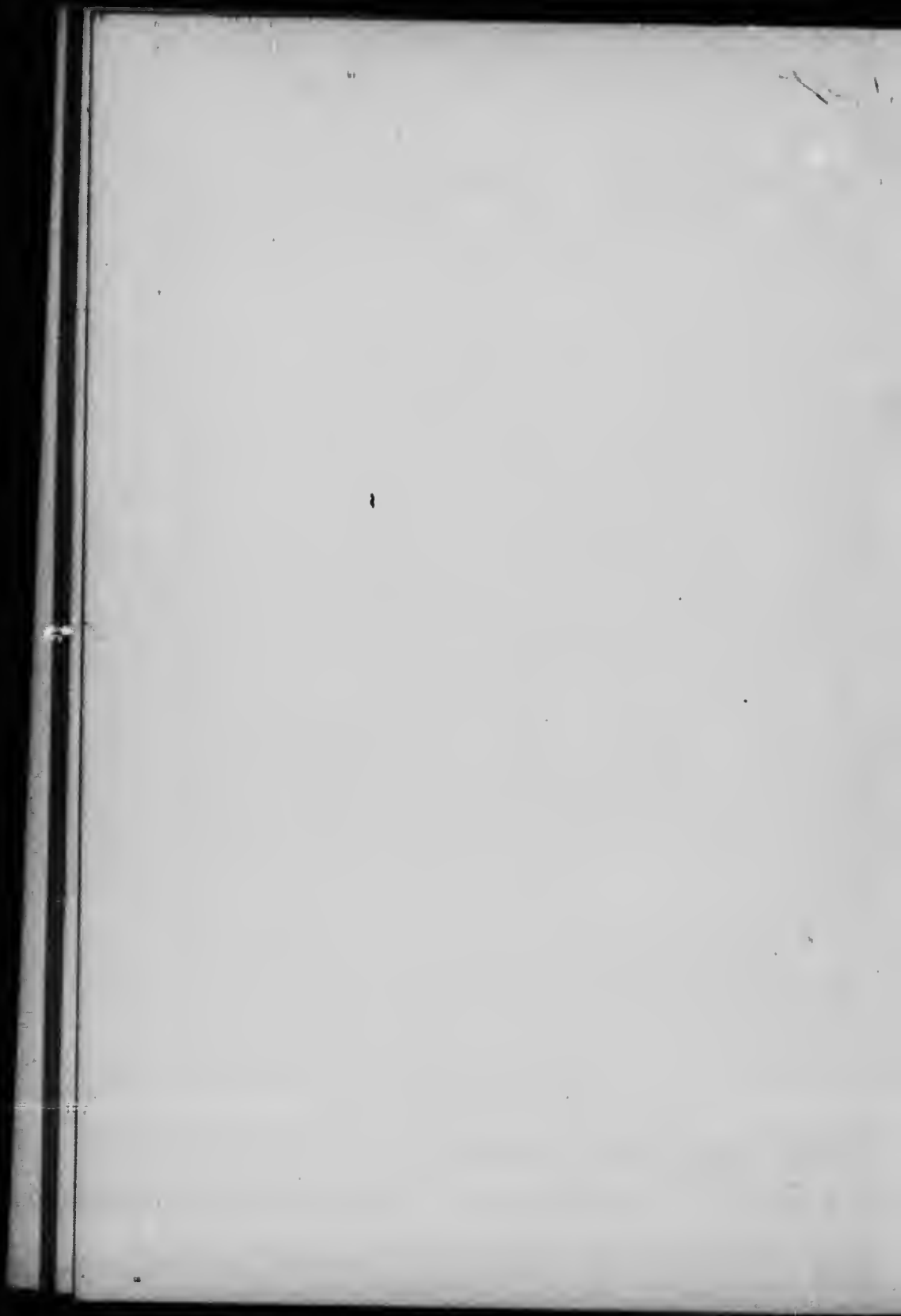
So great a man, I really cannot see

What you can find to like in Italy;

To him we all agree to give the crown.'



The Duke of Norfolk
After Titian



"Diego answered thus: 'I saw in Venice
The truest test of the good and beautiful;
First, in my judgment, ever stands that school,
And Titian first of all Italian men is.'"

"Tizian ze quel che porta la bandiera."

Learn that line by heart, and act, at all events for some time to come, upon Velasquez' opinion in that matter. Titian is much the safest master for you. Raphael's power, such as it was, and great as it was, depended wholly upon transcendental characters in his mind; it is "Raphaelesque," properly so called; but Titian's power is simply the power of doing right. Whatever came before Titian, he did wholly as it *ought* to be done. . . . There are three Venetians who are never separated in my mind — Titian, Veronese, and Tintoret. They all have their own unequalled gifts, and Tintoret especially has imagination and depth of soul which I think renders him indisputably the greatest *man*; but, equally indisputably, Titian is the greatest painter;

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and therefore the greatest painter who ever lived. You may be led wrong by Tintoret in many respects, wrong by Raphael in more; all that you will learn from Titian will be right.





