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978-1-108-00866-2 - The Works of John Ruskin, Volume 18

John Ruskin

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The Works of John Ruskin

VOLUME 18: SESAME AND LILIES; THE
ETHICS OF THE DUST; THE CROWN OF
WILD OLIVE

JOHN RUSKIN
EDITED BY EDWARD TYAS COOK
AND ALEXANDER WEDDERBURN



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Cambridge University Press
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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108008662

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2009

This edition first published 1905
This digitally printed version 2009

ISBN 978-1-108-00866-2 Paperback

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JOHN RUSKIN

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Sir E Burne-Jones

Allen & Co. Sc.

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THE WORKS OF
JOHN RUSKIN

EDITED BY

E. T. COOK

AND

ALEXANDER WEDDERBURN



LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN, 156, CHARING CROSS ROAD
NEW YORK: LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
1905

Cambridge University Press
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VOLUME XVIII

SESAME AND LILIES
THE ETHICS OF THE DUST
THE CROWN OF WILD OLIVE

WITH LETTERS ON
PUBLIC AFFAIRS
1859-1866

SESAME AND LILIES
THE ETHICS OF THE DUST
THE CROWN OF WILD OLIVE

WITH LETTERS ON
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

1859-1866

BY
JOHN RUSKIN

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN, 156, CHARING CROSS ROAD
NEW YORK: LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1905

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The drawing of Plate I. was exhibited at Boston and New York in 1879 (see Vol. XIII. p. 584); that of Plate II. was No. 261 in the Ruskin Exhibition at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours, 1901; that of Plate III. was No. 333 in the same Exhibition; and that of Plate IV. was No. 171 (also No. 159 in the Coniston Exhibition of 1900).

Cambridge University Press

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INTRODUCTION TO VOL. XVIII

IN this volume and the next are contained Ruskin's writings between the death of his father (1864) and his assumption of the duties of Slade Professor at Oxford (1870). The present volume contains the following books: I. *Sesame and Lilies* (first published in 1865), II. *The Ethics of the Dust* (1866), and III. *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866). In these books there are many allusions to public affairs, and especially to questions of colonial and foreign policy. In an Appendix, therefore, Ruskin's letters and a speech made on such subjects during the years in question are included.

The writings thus included in the present volume belong to the years 1864, 1865, and 1866; but other writings of the same years are given in the following volume, which, however, in the main, is occupied with work of a later date (1867-1869). In order to apportion the material more or less equally between the two volumes, and to preserve a general similarity of subject-matter in each of them, it has not been possible to observe an exclusively chronological distribution. The present volume contains Discourses on General Subjects; the next volume, Papers on Art and Greek Mythology. The following chronological list of all Ruskin's published work during the six years in question (with references to the volumes in which the various pieces are printed) will give the reader at a glance a striking idea of Ruskin's many-sided work:—

1864. April 21. "Traffic": a Lecture at Bradford—Vol. XVIII. (*Crown of Wild Olive*, Lecture II.).
- „ October and November. Letters to the *Daily Telegraph* on "Supply and Demand"—Vol. XVII. Appendix iii.
- „ December 6. "Kings' Treasuries": a Lecture at Manchester—Vol. XVIII. (*Sesame and Lilies*, Lecture I.).
- „ December 7. A Few Words to the Boys of the Manchester Grammar School—Vol. XVIII. Appendix v.

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1864. December 14. "Queens' Gardens": a Lecture at Manchester—
 Vol. XVIII. (*Sesame and Lilies*, Lecture II.).
1865. January to July. Papers in the *Art Journal* on "The Cestus of
 Aglaia"—Vol. XIX.
- „ January 24. "Work": a Lecture at Camberwell—Vol. XVIII.
 (*Crown of Wild Olive*, Lecture I.).
- „ February and May. "Notes on the Shape and Structure of some
 parts of the Alps, with reference to Denudation": Papers in
 the *Geological Magazine*. Reserved for a later volume.
- „ February 18. An Address at the Working Men's College. Not
 reported.
- „ April and May. Letters to the *Pall Mall Gazette* on "Work
 and Wages"—Vol. XVII. Appendix iv.
- „ May 15. The Study of Architecture in Schools: a Paper read
 to the Royal Institute of British Architects—Vol. XIX.
- „ June 21. *Sesame and Lilies* published.
- „ September and October. Letters to the *Daily Telegraph* on
 "Servants and Houses"—Vol. XVII. Appendix v.
- „ October 2. Second Edition of *Sesame and Lilies* published (with
 a new Preface).
- „ November 18. Competition and Mechanical Art: a Lecture at
 the Working Men's College—Vol. XIX.
- „ November and December. Letters on Geology in the *Reader*.—
 Reserved for a later volume.
- „ "War": a Lecture at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich.
 —Vol. XVIII. (*Crown of Wild Olive*, Lecture III.).
- „ December. *Ethics of the Dust* published—Vol. XVIII.
1866. January to April. Papers in the *Art Journal* on "The Cestus of
 Aglaia"—Vol. XIX.
- „ May 14. *The Crown of Wild Olive* published—Vol. XVIII.
- „ September 5. "The Eyre Defence Fund": a Speech delivered
 at a Committee Meeting of the Fund—Vol. XVIII. Ap-
 pendix iv.

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1867. March to May. The letters, afterwards published as *Time and Tide*, appeared—Vol. XVII.
- „ May 24. “The Relation of National Ethics to National Arts”: the Rede Lecture at Cambridge—Vol. XIX.
- „ June 7. “The Present State of Modern Art”: a Lecture at the Royal Institution—Vol. XIX.
- „ August and November. “Banded and Brecciated Concretions”: Papers in the *Geological Magazine*.—Reserved for a later volume.
1868. January, April, and May. Further papers in the same series.
- „ Easter. “German Popular Stories”: a Preface—Vol. XIX.
- „ May 13. “The Mystery of Life and its Arts”: a Lecture at Dublin—Vol. XVIII. (*Sesame and Lilies*, Lecture III.).
- „ July 4 and 15. “Trade-Unions and Strikes”: Speeches at the Social Science Association—Vol. XVII., Appendix vii.
- „ July 18. “The Three-Legged Stool of Art”: Remarks made at the West London School of Art—Vol. XIX.
- „ August. Letters to the *Daily Telegraph* on “Railways and the State”—Vol. XVII., Appendix vi.
- „ December. “Notes on the Destitute and Criminal Classes”—Vol. XVII., Appendix viii.
1869. January 29. “The Flamboyant Architecture of the Valley of the Somme”: a Lecture at the Royal Institution—Vol. XIX.
- „ March 9. “Greek Myths of Storm”: a Lecture at University College, London—Vol. XIX. (*Queen of the Air*).
- „ March 15. “The Hercules of Camarina”: a Lecture at the South Lambeth Art School—Vol. XIX. (*Queen of the Air*).
- „ June 22. *Queen of the Air* published—Vol. XIX.
- „ December. “Banded and Brecciated Concretions”: a further paper in the *Geological Magazine*.—Reserved for a later volume.
- „ December 14. “The Future of England”: a Lecture at the Royal Artillery Institution, Woolwich—Vol. XVIII. (*Crown of Wild Olive*, Lecture IV.).

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1870. January. "Banded and Brecciated Concretions": a further paper in the *Geological Magazine*.—Reserved for a later volume.

„ February 4. "Verona and its Rivers": a Lecture at the Royal Institution—Vol. XIX.

The foregoing list will at once bring before the reader the general characteristics of Ruskin's work during the years under review. It largely took the form of lectures and letters—of appeals, that is, upon the platform and through the press. The impulse towards the platform seems to have returned strongly upon him after a period of comparative seclusion; he wanted once more to have his audience face to face, and to rouse them, if he might, to a sense of the evils which was burning within him.¹ The books of this period were thus written mainly for oral delivery; repetitions, which we have previously discussed,² sometimes occur, and a declamatory note is heard.³ Next: these manifold lectures, speeches, articles and books tell of abounding activity and untiring industry; but the work is very discursive. He talks and writes of books and how to read them; of the sphere and education of women; of soldiers and their duties; architects and their functions; servants and their loyalties; masters and their duties. He discusses now the elements of crystallisation or the denudation of the Alps; and now the merits of the manner in which the Jamaica insurrection was suppressed or the policy of non-intervention in European quarrels. He treats of the mythology of Greece and of Egypt and devotes much attention to Greek art, but touches also upon the designs of Burne-Jones, the pictures of Phil Morris, the porches of Abbeville, the tombs of Verona. The laws of work divide his attention with the limitations of engraving; and he passes from the designs upon Greek coins to the management of railways and the prospects of co-operative industry. In looking over the list, one thinks—more than at any preceding period in Ruskin's life, though not more than at some later stages—of his reference in after years to "the incurably desultory character which has brought on me the curse of Reuben, 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.'"⁴ It was impossible that activity so far ranging, even though assisted by Ruskin's colossal industry, should exhaust, with excelling mastery, the many subjects upon which he

¹ See the Preface of 1871 to *Sesame and Lilies* (below, pp. 32–33).

² See Vol. XII. p. xxvii., and Vol. XVI. p. xx.

³ See the author's remarks in this connexion on pp. 33 and 466 n.

⁴ *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 51.

Cambridge University Press

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touched. His literary work, now as throughout his life, was accompanied, it should be remembered, by corresponding activity with the pencil and the brush. "It is strange," he wrote to Professor Norton, "that I hardly ever get anything stated without some grave mistake, however true in my main discoveries."¹ Nay, not strange; but inevitable. And, in turning from our list to the actual contents of this and the succeeding volume—which comprise not a few of Ruskin's most beautiful passages, and which throw flashes of insight upon so many subjects, one hastens to correct "the curse of Reuben" by the compensation which he also took to his comfort. "But I reflect, hereupon, with resolute self-complacency, that water, when good, is a good thing, though it is not stable; and that it may be better sometimes to irrigate than to excel."²

Yet, scattered as were Ruskin's studies during the years now under review, there was in all his more important books of the period a common impulse, with a more orderly sequence, than may disclose itself to careless readers. The wide range over which he travelled was due not only to his intellectual and artistic curiosity, as boundless as it was desultory; it was caused also by the war which had now become chronic between two sides of his nature. The moral and active side was at strife with the artistic and contemplative. "I am essentially," he writes at one time, "a painter and a leaf dissector. . . . My right work is to be out among the budding banks and hedges, outlining sprays of hawthorn and clusters of primrose."³ And so, he was always intending that this piece of writing or that should "close his political work for many a day."⁴ But at other times the political side won the battle. "I am weary of all writing and speaking about art," he told the architects in 1865, "and most, of my own. . . . I have seceded from the study not only of architecture, but nearly of all art; and have given myself, as I would in a besieged city, to seek the best modes of getting bread and water for its multitudes, there remaining no question, it seems to me, of other than such grave business for the time."⁵ Each side was defeated in turn. Having declared his secession from the study of architecture, he went to Abbeville to analyse and draw "the flamboyant architecture of the valley of the Somme"; having "closed his political work for many a day" in 1867, he threw himself into it

¹ *Letters to Charles Eliot Norton*, vol. ii. p. 20; reprinted in a later volume of this edition.

² *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 51.

³ *Time and Tide*, §§ 117, 69 (Vol. XVII. pp. 415, 376).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

⁵ "The Study of Architecture," §§ 4, 18 (Vol. XIX.).

with particular energy in 1868.¹ But if there was no complete victory for either side, there was reconciliation, and to each branch of his studies he brought the same analytical methods, the same earnest search for truth. His proper work of “outlining sprays of hawthorn” went on, but more and more he became insistent upon the foundation of noble art in ethical conditions. This is the note of all the discourses upon art contained in the next volume; it was the topic, as well as the title, of his hitherto unpublished Rede Lecture at Cambridge, which may be taken as the central work, in that field, of the years now under consideration. One sees the same overmastering moral impulse even in some of Ruskin’s scientific studies. It was the *Ethics* of the Dust that he invited his readers to study; the “Crystal Virtues” and the “Crystal Rest” were the chief of “the elements of crystallisation” which he taught “to little housewives.” And so, again, though his proper work, in science and in art, was not allowed to drop, he was yet continually impelled to carry forward his social and political teaching, applying its lessons to fresh fields, or proclaiming it, in different language, to new audiences. He has himself noted, in a retrospect of his literary life, the connexion between one of the books contained in the present volume and the economic writings contained in the preceding volume. “The wealth of a country is *in* its good men and women, and in nothing else. . . . This is first, and more or less eloquently, stated in the close of the chapter, called the Veins of Wealth, of *Unto this Last*; and is scientifically, and in sifted terms, explained and enforced in *Munera Pulveris*. . . . It is taught, with all the faculty that I am possessed of, in *Sesame and Lilies*, that in a state of society in which men and women are as good as they can be, (under mortal limitation,) the women will be the guiding and purifying power.”² And so, again, “in the one volume of *Sesame and Lilies*—nay, in the last forty pages of its central address to Englishwomen—everything is told that I know of vital truth, everything urged that I see to be needful of vital act.”³ And thus, in the last Preface, which Ruskin wrote to the book (1882), he asks that it should be “read in connection with *Unto this Last*.”⁴ So, also, with regard to *The Crown of Wild Olive*, that volume is in large measure—as will be seen from the references to parallel passages here supplied—a reinforcement of

¹ See in Vol. XVII. (pp. 537 *seq.*) his addresses on Strikes and his “Notes on Employment.”

² *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 90. This function of women is also the subject of several pages of *The Crown of Wild Olive*.

³ *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 57.

⁴ See below, p. 52.

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economic, social, and political teaching contained in the author's earlier books.¹ The lectures to young soldiers—with their appeal “Educate or Govern”²—were in turn, *mutatis mutandis*, reinforced in his inaugural lectures at Oxford, and another of Ruskin's harmonies of his various gospels thus becomes appropriate here: “The *Stones of Venice* taught the laws of constructive art, and the dependence of all human work or edifice, for its beauty, on the happy life of the workman. *Unto this Last* taught the laws of that life itself, and its dependence on the Sun of Justice; the Inaugural Oxford Lectures, the necessity that it should be led, and the gracious laws of beauty and labour recognised, by the upper, no less than by the lower, classes of England.”³

The conditions of the time at which Ruskin wrote the books contained in this volume should be borne in mind by its readers. He has much to say of books, and pleads for the establishment of public libraries “in every considerable city.”⁴ In these days of municipal enterprise and private munificence such pleading sounds familiar, and, in part, superfluous. But, writing forty years ago, Ruskin had to support his plea as savouring of the paradoxical and impracticable. Carlyle, two years later, took the same text for his Inaugural Address at Edinburgh, and introduced it in a tentative way, as of one about to travel on a strange sea.⁵ So, again, on the subject of women's education—in these days of High Schools, Higher Colleges, University Colleges and degrees—Ruskin may seem behind, rather than in front of, the times; but it was not so in the days when he wrote that “a girl's education should be nearly in its course and material of study the same as a boy's,”⁶ and when, alike in practice and in precept, he strove to increase the range and depth of teaching in “Seminaries for young ladies.” His appeals to the hearts and consciences of readers, in the matter of the housing of the working-classes, will never, perhaps, be out of date; for while each generation somewhat raises its standard, each also falls short of it. But when Ruskin wrote *Sesame and Lilies* in 1864, the accommodation for the working-classes both in towns and in the country was very bad. It was not till the following year that the substitution of union for parochial chargeability was

¹ See his note to § 1 of the Introduction; below, p. 385.

² *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 144 (p. 502).

³ *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 78.

⁴ *Sesame and Lilies*, § 49 (p. 104).

⁵ “Nay, I have sometimes thought, why should not there be a library in every county town?” etc. (*Miscellanies*, popular edition, vol. vii. p. 184).

⁶ *Sesame and Lilies*, § 74 (p. 128).

Cambridge University Press

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completed by enacting that the cost of the whole poor relief of the Union should be charged upon the common fund. This was a reform for which Ruskin's friend, Sir John Simon, strongly pleaded; the evil results of the old system, in the matter of housing accommodation, were pointed out in Simon's Report, to the Privy Council, to which Ruskin refers.¹ Legislation to improve the conditions of the Public Health and facilitate the provision of better houses was still some way off. It was in the year of *Sesame and Lilies* that Disraeli suggested, as a variant upon the words of the wise King of Israel, "Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas"; but the Public Health Act and the Artisans' Dwellings Act were not passed till 1875. With regard to the relations of capital and labour, the Trade Union Act, which gave freedom and indeed (until recent decisions of the House of Lords²) immunity to labour combinations, dates from 1871; and, lastly, it was only in 1870 that the State set itself, in Mr. Forster's words, "to complete the voluntary system and fill up the gaps" by establishing a general and national system of elementary education. These are dates which should be borne in mind by those who read Ruskin's references to social questions in the 'sixties.

Ruskin was also much interested in foreign questions, and here again it may be well, as an introduction to the volume, to carry our minds back to the circumstances of the time. The three earliest of the letters here collected in the Appendix (pp. 537–545) are dated 1859, and refer to the Italian question. On this question, his personal sympathies went partly in one direction, his reasoned convictions entirely in the other. He had been on very friendly terms with Austrian officers (including Radetzky himself) in Venice and Verona; and he thought some of the charges against "Austrian oppression" overdone. But he was a warm friend to Italian aspirations; he was also, as we have seen, an admirer of the Emperor Napoleon III. He had been a strong supporter of the Crimean War, in which Cavour had ranged the Sardinian Government on the side of England and France. To Ruskin, France, almost more than Italy, was his second country. He knew the French language, and was fond of its literature; his early love had been a French girl, and he still had many friends in Paris; he had the artist's eye for the charm of French landscape,³ and the very air of France came to him as if from Paradise;⁴ the architecture and

¹ Note to § 30 of *Sesame and Lilies* (below, p. 105 n.).

² Such as *Quinn v. Leathem*, and *The Taff Vale Railway Co. v. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants*, in the session of 1901.

³ *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. (p. 237 and n.).

⁴ Vol. VII. p. xx.

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the illumination of France in the Middle Ages were very dear to him; from France, as he often said, could lessons best be learnt in chivalry, and in the graces of civilised life.¹ He was at all times, therefore, a warm advocate of a good understanding between England and France²—a note in his views of foreign policy which is heard very often in the present volume.³ These several factors combined to make him an enthusiastic admirer of Napoleon when in 1859 France joined Sardinia in declaring war against Austria. At this moment England was in the midst of a political crisis at home; Lord Derby's Ministry was tottering; a General Election followed, and in the end Lord Palmerston returned to power. Ruskin, who never took any interest in the fortunes of parliamentary warfare, was indignant that at a time which was fraught with such grave issues for Italian freedom England should be absorbed in a domestic quarrel.⁴ If he could have had his way, England would have thrown herself heartily, at the side of France and Sardinia, into the war of liberation. The actual state of opinion in this country was very different; the Tories were for the most part on the side of Austria, and among the Liberals platonic sympathy with Italy was not unmixed with suspicions of Louis Napoleon. The net result of these conflicting factors was wittily summed up by the late Lord Houghton. "What," he was asked by friends in Paris, "do you English really want?" "We want," he answered, "first, that the Austrians should beat you French thoroughly; next, we want that the Italians should be free; and then we want them to be very grateful to us for doing nothing towards it."⁵ This was the state of mind which Ruskin chastises in his letters on "The Italian Question." The Peace of Villafranca (July 1859), by which Louis Napoleon secured Savoy and Nice as the price of his intervention, did not wholly alienate Ruskin's sympathies from the Emperor. If he did not go as far as his friend Mrs. Browning, who still "believed entirely in the Emperor"⁶ and saw in him a great man whose "great deed was too great,"⁷ yet he made allowances and was ready to find compensation in the material benefits of the French occupation of Savoy.⁸ But in England, the conduct of Louis Napoleon excited the utmost

¹ *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. (Vol. V. p. 416); *Aratra Pentelici*, Preface, § 1.

² See the concluding passage of *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. (Vol. V.)

³ See pp. 104, 438–439, 540, 542.

⁴ See his letter to the *Scotsman* of August 1, 1859; below, p. 544.

⁵ Reported, on the authority of Odo Russell, in a letter of Mrs. Browning (*Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, vol. ii. p. 376).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

⁷ "A Tale of Villafranca."

⁸ See his letter to Dr. John Brown in Vol. XVII. p. 270 n.

indignation. It lashed the previous suspicion of French policy to fury. It is the turn of Austria to-day, men said, it may be ours to-morrow; if his alliance with Sardinia did not prevent the annexation of Savoy and Nice, why should his professed friendship for us save England from his ambitious rapacity? The invasion panic sprung up. In May, Tennyson had printed his "Riflemen, Form" in the *Times*, and the movement now gathered much force; while Palmerston sanctioned the expenditure of millions upon coast fortifications. Ruskin sympathised with the formation of rifle clubs,¹ but deplored the panic; and it is this which forms the subject of repeated references in the present volume and other of his writings. "France and England," he said, "buy panic of each other; they pay, each of them, for ten-thousand-pounds-worth of terror a year."² It was for Ruskin the disappointment of enthusiastic hopes. "If England and France," he had written, three years before, of the alliance cemented, as he believed, by the Crimean War, "fail of this, if again petty jealousies or selfish interests prevail to unknit their hands from the armoured grasp, then, indeed, their faithful children will have fallen in vain; there will be a shaking among the bones that bleach by the mounds of Sebastopol."³

This was not the only cause which Ruskin found for disappointment in the results of the Crimean War. In 1863 insurrection broke out in Poland. The cause of Polish freedom was very popular in this country; it enlisted friends among men of all parties in Great Britain and Ireland. The Manchester School—with its general doctrine of non-intervention, which Ruskin assails in this volume⁴—was the only exception. In France the enthusiasm was yet greater, and the Emperor Napoleon was prepared to intervene if England would join him. The Polish insurrectionary leaders looked for foreign intervention to save them in an otherwise hopeless contest, and their hopes ran high when the British Government went so far as to despatch to Russia, in concert with France and Austria, a note containing six points for the pacification of Poland. But thus far and no further was England prepared to go; words, not deeds, were her policy;

¹ "Thanks for Mrs. Browning's noble letter," he wrote to a friend (Miss Heaton, March 9, 1860), "but she's wholly wrong (for the first time in her life, I believe) about the Rifles—the only thing to save us from our accursed commerce, and make us men again instead of gold shovels." Among the riflemen who had formed was Ruskin's assistant, Mr. George Allen, and Ruskin took a keen interest in his proficiency as a shot.

² *Sesame and Lilies*, § 48 (below, p. 104), and Vol. XVII. p. 104.

³ *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. (Vol. V. p. 416).

⁴ See below, pp. 480, 540.

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Palmerston had said that he regarded the Polish insurrection as “the just punishment inflicted by Heaven on Russia,” but he absolutely declined to co-operate with France in making England an instrument of Providence. The insurrection was ruthlessly suppressed by Russia, now free from the dread of foreign intervention, and by May 1864 order once more reigned in Warsaw. It was order after unflinching severities; banishments, floggings, shootings, and hangings were remorselessly applied, and women were made subject to these instruments of repression impartially with men. Ruskin’s indignation, alike at the action of Russia and at the inaction of England, finds expression in many pages of this volume. By subscribing to Russian loans, he says, people in England became accessories to the “murder of Polish women and children.”¹ And, again, speaking at Manchester soon after the final suppression of the insurrection, he deplores the coldness of heart which “can look on and see noble nations murdered, man by man, without a tear.”² In a similar spirit was Ruskin’s reference at Manchester to the non-intervention of England to protect the Circassians who, in the same year (1864), were being driven into exile.”³

The next cause which enlisted Ruskin’s sympathies and excited him to similar protests was that of the Danes. The reader would hardly care to embark even upon a short voyage in the stormy and complicated waters of the Schleswig-Holstein question. It will here suffice to say that there was a strong current of sympathy in this country with the Danes; that Palmerston, when he stated in Parliament⁴ that “if any violent attempt were made to overthrow the rights and interfere with the independence of Denmark, those who made the attempt would find in the result that it would not be Denmark alone with which they would have to contend,” had not a united Cabinet behind him; that, when it came to the point, Palmerston and Russell were in favour of war against Prussia and Austria, but Gladstone and the majority were on the other side;⁵ that the Queen was strongly against any anti-Prussian intervention; that the British Government made certain overtures to France for a joint protest; that the Emperor Napoleon, inclined perhaps to give tit-for-tat for England’s refusal to join him in the case of Poland, rejected

¹ *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 35 (below, p. 416).

² *Sesame and Lilies*, § 29 (below, p. 81).

³ *Ibid.*, § 72 n. (below, p. 127 n.).

⁴ July 23, 1863.

⁵ There is an interesting account of the Cabinet meeting which decided the question in Morley’s *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii. pp. 119–120. For the Queen’s part in the matter, see Sidney Lee’s *Queen Victoria: a Biography*, pp. 342 *seq.*

the overtures; and that in the end Denmark was left to its fate. Ruskin's wrath at this result is energetically expressed in his letter on "The Position of Denmark" (pp. 548, 549).

In the era of European confusion, with some aspects of which we have been dealing, "the English Cabinet," says Gladstone's biographer, himself a non-intervention man, "found no powerful or noble part to play."¹ To Ruskin, writing in the midst of the events, the part of inaction seemed the more ignoble from its contrast with other scenes in which the English Government did play an active part. The first "opium war" with China (1839-1842) was succeeded in 1857-1858 by further hostilities, which resulted in freedom of access to Chinese rivers. But in 1860 there was a renewal of disturbances, and the Summer Palace was, by way of punishment, levelled to the ground. Thus, stern action in China was simultaneous with non-intervention in Italy; and so, again, in 1863, when Poland was left to her fate, the British fleet bombarded Kagosima in Japan. Into the merits of these various policies of action and inaction, this is no occasion for entering; but it is necessary to bear the facts in mind in reading the present volume. Ruskin's sense of the contrast, thus indicated, finds expression in *Sesame and Lilies* and *The Crown of Wild Olive*,² and in his letter on "The Foreign Policy of England" (pp. 546, 547). To his part in the controversy which raged round the Jamaica Insurrection of 1865, allusion is made at a later stage of this Introduction (pp. xliv.-xlvi.).

1864-1866

Having now defined the general characteristics of the well-marked period in Ruskin's work which is contained in this and the succeeding volume, and having described the conditions of the time which it is necessary to remember in reading the books and letters here collected, we now proceed to give some account (1) of his life during the years covered by the present volume, and (2) of the several books which are contained in it.

One reason of the scattered nature of Ruskin's work in 1864 and succeeding years was the pressure of home duties caused by the death of his father. This cast upon Ruskin responsibilities from which he had been exempt. His father's house and his father's purse had

¹ Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii. p. 115.

² See below, pp. 82, 480.

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hitherto been free to him; not without some resultant constraint and vexation, but also without the worry of business details. It seems from incidental allusions in Ruskin's letters that the father had been in the habit of placing to the son's bank account £1000 or £1500 a year; this was Ruskin's ordinary revenue, in addition to such sums as he might receive from his publisher. But he had an extraordinary revenue also; for, in the case of any special expenditure—as for pictures, or benevolent loans of an exceptionally large amount—he seems to have drawn on his father's purse. The administration of the fortune now passed into the son's hands, and he had, moreover, a widowed mother whose care was his first and constant duty.

Ruskin sent to some of his more intimate friends full accounts of his father's last illness and of his own feelings in presence of the loss he had sustained. To Burne-Jones and his wife, with whom he had intended to go to Florence in the spring, he wrote (March 4) on the day after the old man's death:—

“I am at this moment more anxious about the effect upon *you* of this thing, than about anything else. My mother has behaved so wisely, as well as bravely, that my chief anxiety for her is passed. She slept a little last night, and this morning, when a woman who felt less would have insisted on staying beside the body, she let me take her away in five minutes; and has since been sitting quietly beside me, telling me directions of letters and talking just a little now and then, and I hope the deadliest of the shock is passed.

“But I'm very anxious about you and your fretting for me—not to speak of the disappointment about Florence. I must have you and Georgie go as *comfortably* as if I were with you; that's the only thing you can do for me (that, and not drawing melancholy subjects, nor ill-made hands), so I mean to get you a courier who will insist on your doing things correctly.

“I'm used to live in pain, and *this* kind of pain does not kill by withering as other sorts of pain do; I have no feeling of weakness, nor of fever, and slept without dreaming last night—though the last forty hours were enough to make one dream, one should have thought. The *quite* wonderful thing to me is the way that it changes one's notions of the past character. I had often measured my feeling to my father, as I thought; but I never had any conception of the way that I should have to mourn—not over what I lose, now, but over what I *have* lost *until* now.”¹

And so next day, “I find a curious thing that natural sorrow does

¹ This letter is quoted from the *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. i. p. 274.

not destroy strength, but gives it; while an irregular, out-of-way, avoidable sorrow kills—according to its weight.” And, again, about the funeral (March 9): “No, there’s no day worse than the first. You don’t suppose that the dramatic performances of upholsterers trouble me, worse than a nightmare—and I’m the only person they *can* trouble.” Then he reverts (March 11) to a scheme of needlework which Burne-Jones was to design for the girls at Winnington to execute:¹—

“The tapestry is just as much to me as ever it was, and far more likely to come into direct use now, than it was before—not that I either have—or can form—any plans yet; my mother would live wherever I asked her to live, but I am not at all sure that I shall wish her to live elsewhere than here. Her old friends are useful to her—and I find that beautiful things don’t make one happy (except only eyes, and hair, and Turner drawings—but there are more of those in England than elsewhere), but only one’s own quiet order and work and progress.”²

Among the letters of condolence which he received was one from Froude, who had seen a good deal during recent years of the home life at Denmark Hill, and had conceived a real admiration for “the entirely honest merchant.” “Such a fine, noble old man,” he wrote (March 8), “or rather not old, for he seemed in his mental and moral prime. He struck me as being so true a man—true in word and in deed.”³

It was characteristic of Ruskin that he spent little time in fond regrets, found nothing but impatient disgust in “the trappings and the suits of woe,” and was able to analyse with strict impartiality the relations between himself and his father. To Acland, who had taken a different view of the case from Froude’s, Ruskin wrote (March 9):—

“You never have had—nor with all your medical experience have you probably ever seen the loss of a father who would have sacrificed his life for his son, and yet forced his son to sacrifice his life to him, and sacrifice it in vain.”

Truth in all things was the object of Ruskin’s search; and “To-day”

¹ See Vol. XVII, p. lxxiv.

² These passages also are reprinted from the *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. i. pp. 275–276.

³ Ruskin sent Froude’s letter to Acland, from whose papers this passage is printed.

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was his motto. To another friend (Mr. Charles H. L. Woodd) he wrote (March 9):—

“MY DEAR WOODD,—Many thanks for your letter. I thought you would like to come to this piece of business, as people think it respectful to see their friends buried. To me, it is, as it always has been of late years, one universal puzzle. To see you Christians as gay as larks while nothing touches you in your own affairs or friends—watching thousands of people massacred and tortured—helping to do it—selling them guns to shoot each other with, and talking civilities and protocols to men who are walking up to their loins in human blood.

“Presently God knocks you on the head with a coffin’s end, and you suddenly perceive that something has gone wrong—scratch your heads—say—‘Dear me—here’s one of *my* friends dead—really the world is a very sad world. How very extraordinary! let me improve the occasion!’

“You are funny people—*vous autres*.

“I wish you were not coming or would not come to-morrow, for you are real friends—and I don’t care to associate you always with the Undertaker’s *Divina Commedia*; however, if you must, you must.

“I thought I could have ended in that page—but you will be glad to know my mother keeps well. If the snow holds, she won’t even hear the wheels on the gravel.

“Yours faithfully,
 “J. RUSKIN.”

The tragi-comedy was played, and Ruskin set himself to work. His father had left to his wife £37,000 and the house at Denmark Hill for life; and to his son £120,000, various leasehold and freehold properties, and his pictures, then valued at £10,000.¹ There was much business to be done, investments to be considered, stocks to be realised, leases to be renewed; and many of Ruskin’s letters of this time are to his faithful friend W. H. Harrison, who rendered him much useful help in such matters. Then there was his mother’s way of life to be considered—she was now 83 years of age; and though she bore with stern composure the loss of the husband who had been her constant companion for nearly 50 years, Ruskin felt that “there was immediate need for some companionship which might lighten the burden of the days to her.”² It chanced that a young girl, the grand-daughter

¹ See *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 76 (Notes and Correspondence).

² *Præterita*, iii. § 60.