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# The Works of John Ruskin

VOLUME 20: LECTURES ON ART AND  
ARATRA PENTELICI

JOHN RUSKIN  
EDITED BY EDWARD TYAS COOK  
AND ALEXANDER WEDDERBURN



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WORKS OF  
JOHN RUSKIN

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*LIBRARY EDITION*

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



LECTURES ON ART  
AND  
ARATRA PENTELICI

WITH LECTURES AND NOTES  
ON GREEK ART AND MYTHOLOGY

1870

BY  
JOHN RUSKIN

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

1905

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*Note.*—The drawings by Ruskin given in Plates D, E, and G have not been exhibited, nor hitherto reproduced. The drawing, reproduced on Plate XIX., is at Brantwood (water-colour, 10 × 11); it was exhibited at Coniston (No. 180), at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours (No. 256) and at Manchester (No. 415).



## INTRODUCTION TO VOL. XX

THIS volume—containing *Lectures on Art* and *Aratra Pentelici*, together with some additional matter related to the latter book—introduces us to Ruskin's first Professorship at Oxford (1870–1878).<sup>1</sup> It was an eventful period in his life. These years saw the death of his mother and his removal to a new home; they were the time of his “most acute mental pain” and “most nearly mortal illness.”<sup>2</sup> Also this was perhaps the busiest period even in his busy life. In it he delivered eleven courses of lectures at Oxford. He wrote guide-books. He published at various intervals portions of works on Botany, on Geology, and on Drawing. He started a library of standard literature. He arranged an Art Collection at Oxford, contributing to it some hundreds of his own drawings—a large number of them made for the purpose—and writing several explanatory catalogues. He founded a Museum at Sheffield. He engaged in several social experiments; the better sweeping of the streets in St. Giles's and the sale of tea at a fair price were not too trivial for his efforts, nor the reformation of England, through a Companionship of St. George, too large. He wrote incessantly to the newspapers on topics of the day; and all the while he poured forth, at monthly intervals, that strange and passionate medley of information, controversy, homily, reminiscence, and prophecy which he entitled *Fors Clavigera*. These tasks were undertaken, not one thing at a time, but often all at the same time. “Head too full,” he wrote in his diary (February 12, 1872), “and don't know which to write first.” He solved the problem by writing something of everything every month, or even every day. He describes in *Fors* how at a particular moment he had seven large books going through the press at the same time;<sup>3</sup> and his MS. books of this period reflect this process, passing on successive pages from notes for one subject to another. “There is no use,” he wrote, again, in his diary (January 29, 1872), “saying tired and ill; always now.” No use;

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin was elected in 1869, and re-elected in 1873 and 1876. At the end of 1878 he resigned. In 1883 he was again elected. It is convenient to speak of the earlier period (1870–1878) as that of his “first Professorship.”

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 13.

<sup>3</sup> Letter 59 (October 1875).

## INTRODUCTION

and no wonder. The intense strain upon his emotions, the unsparing drafts upon his physical and mental resources, were doomed to pay the penalty; and the period of his life now under review comes to an end with a serious illness, followed by the resignation of his Professorship.

It will be apparent from what has thus been said that an exclusively chronological order now becomes impossible—alike in the arrangement of the contents of the volumes and in the biographical introductions to them. A volume, for instance, which should contain all that Ruskin published in 1875, and nothing else, would have to be made up of twelve numbers of *Fors Clavigera*, two chapters of *Ariadne Florentina*, four parts of *Mornings in Florence*, two of *Proserpina*, two of *Deucalion*, and a pamphlet of *Academy Notes*. It thus becomes necessary in arranging the later volumes, as was indicated in the Preface to this edition, to temper the chronological order with considerations of topical appropriateness, and to distribute the biographical and bibliographical matter accordingly. The present volume contains the lectures given in the first year of Ruskin's Professorship; and this Introduction, besides discussing the particular books here included, recounts the foundation of the Chair, and gives a general description of his work and life at Oxford, as well as some account of a foreign tour in 1870, in which he collected material for future lectures. The next volume (XXI.) deals with the Art Collection which he arranged at Oxford in connexion with the Professorship. Then, in Volumes XXII. and XXIII., the rest of his Oxford Lectures during the first Professorship—with some exceptions explained in the Introduction to the former volume—are given. The arrangement of later volumes, and the distribution of topics in the several Introductions, are explained in the proper place.

## RUSKIN'S WORK AT OXFORD

Ruskin's call to Oxford as Professor was due to the munificence of the late Mr. Felix Slade. The desirability of establishing a Chair of Fine Art in the old Universities had long been mooted. It had been one of Acland's fondest hopes. "I will whip in," he wrote in 1845, "and try to get myself made Teacher of Artistic Anatomy in some manner to the Randolph Institution [now the University Galleries], get Ruskin down, and get him made Professor of Art."<sup>1</sup> A year before, Mr. Greswell, as we have seen,<sup>2</sup> had published a pamphlet

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Henry Wentworth Acland: a Memoir*, by J. B. Atlay, 1903, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. III. p. 674 n.

## INTRODUCTION

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advocating that “three Professorships of the Theory of Art (and especially of Christian Art) should be founded by Royal Authority, one in London, and the other two at Oxford and Cambridge.” Ruskin himself had written on the importance of “The Arts as a Branch of Education”;<sup>1</sup> and Acland had in 1867 hoped indirectly to attain his end if Ruskin could be made a Curator of the University Galleries.<sup>2</sup> The realisation of all these hopes was left to Mr. Slade, a wealthy Proctor in Doctors’ Commons, and a great virtuoso and collector. Dying in 1868, he bequeathed valuable collections of glass, Japanese carvings, pottery and engravings to the British Museum, and a sum of £35,000 for the endowment of (Slade) Professorships in Fine Art in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and in University College, London.<sup>3</sup> The “Graduate of Oxford,” “Author of *Modern Painters*,” was obviously marked out for the Professorship in that University; and, though other names were tentatively mentioned,<sup>4</sup> Ruskin was unanimously appointed. His friends, Liddell and Acland, were among the electors, and to them he sent his thanks, his hopes, and promises:—

“HÔTEL GIESSBACH, LAC DE BRIENTZ,  
 “19th August, 1869.

“MY DEAR ACLAND,—Your letter has given me very deep pleasure. I cannot answer to-day, but it is very touching to me to see what strength of feeling you have for me. I am thankful also to hear of the Dean’s having wished this, and wrought for it.

“I hope both he and you will find that you have been more right than it is possible you should yet think in giving me this position. The last ten years have ripened what there was in me of serviceableness, and chastised much of my hasty stubborn and other foolish, or worse, faults—more than all that had happened to me in former life—and though much has been killed and much spoiled of me, what is left is, I believe, just what (if any of me) will be useful at Oxford. I believe you will both be greatly surprised for one thing at the caution with which I shall avoid saying anything with the University authority which may be either questionable by, or offensive to, even persons who know little of my subject, and at the generally quiet tone to which I shall reduce myself in all public duty.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. XVI. pp. 449–454.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. XIX. p. xxxv.

<sup>3</sup> A “Preliminary Notice” of Mr. Slade, by his friend, Sir A. W. Franks, may be found in the privately printed (1871) *Catalogue of the Collection of Glass formed by Felix Slade, Esq., F.S.A.* The collections which he bequeathed to the Museum had cost him £28,000.

<sup>4</sup> See Mr. J. B. Atlay’s *Memoir of Sir Henry Acland*, p. 370.

## INTRODUCTION

“You may, on the other hand, both be disappointed—partly by actual want of energy in me, partly by my carelessness about immediate results. But on the whole, I believe I shall put as much fire into the work as any one else, and what there is, will be without smoke, or nearly so.

“I have been very hard at work for exactly three months at Verona and Venice, and it gives me good help and confidence to find that, while I have largely to extend and correct partial views in many directions, the main gist of what I have written seventeen years ago is entirely right, and the things I then declared to be admirable, *more* admirable, *in the sense I meant*, than even I then thought them.

“For instance, I now recognise in Tintoret faults before entirely hidden from me, because I can measure him by standards I then knew not, and because my own character is more formed. But the speciality of art power, the invention, and the magnificent painter’s handling which expresses it, are now more amazing to me than ever, and I left the Scuola more crushed by the sense of power immeasurably above me than in my early youth.

“I have written a line to Angie<sup>1</sup> also; if she tells me you are staying at Wildbad, I will write again before I leave the Giessbach.

“Ever your affectionate friend,  
 “J. RUSKIN.”

“DENMARK HILL, S.E.,  
 “2nd September, 1869.

“DEAR MR. DEAN,—Your kind letter was sent abroad to a wrong address and has only reached me to-day. I thought it better to wait for it before thanking you for the exertion of your influence—I know how earnestly—to obtain my appointment to this Professorship.

“I hope that in some respects you will find that I shall be able to justify your trust in me more than I have yet given you ground to expect, for I shall scrupulously avoid the expression of any of my own peculiar opinions when I speak by permission of the University, and I shall endeavour to bring whatever I venture to teach, into closer harmony with the system of University as it *used* to be, than its Conservative members would I think at present hope from me. For while I have been always earnestly pleading for the extension of education, I have never used that word in the sense to which it has been warped in the popular English manner, and there is no

<sup>1</sup> Miss Aeland.

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modern error in that respect which I more regret than the increasingly prevalent corruption of a University as a place for teaching youth various trades or accomplishments by which they may get their living, instead of what it has been—and must against all vulgar pressure maintain itself in being—a place where the character is to be formed which shall make Life graceful and honourable—after it has been won.

“I suppose it would be well that I should come to Oxford soon after the autumn term begins, to talk over the possibilities and needs of things with you and Acland and others who may care to advise me. In the meantime let me not trespass on your happy vacation hours by any anxiety as to what I may wish or endeavour to do. I will answer for its being nothing intemperate or mischievous, though I cannot answer for its being useful—at least for a time. My own impression is that I must work for very slow results, trying to lose no ground once gained.

“With sincere regards to Mrs. Liddell,

“Believe me, dear Mr. Dean,

“Gratefully and faithfully yours,

“J. RUSKIN.

“Let me thank you and Mrs. Liddell for your kind invitation to the Deanery, but I never now stay at *any* friends’ houses, for my best hours for the little I can do are before breakfast, and I am *always* so tired in the evening that I cannot rightly take part in the talk or cheerfulness of the after-dinner circle.”

Ruskin’s expressions of thanks were no empty formula. He felt his appointment to be a great compliment and a great trust. “Whatever happens now,” he said to his mother (February 8, 1870) after his Inaugural Lecture, “I *have* been permitted by the ordaining Power to begin in Oxford the study of my own art, for others.” Henceforth, Ruskin became to all his friends “The Professor,” as presently to disciples of his economic teaching, “The Master.”

A Chair of Fine Art was, then, established at Oxford, and Ruskin had been called by acclamation to fill it. How did he discharge the responsibility? Four different views may be held of the Professorial office. A Professor at Oxford or Cambridge may be appointed by way of ornament, or for the purpose of research, or in order to give general instruction, or, lastly, with a view to professional teaching. Ruskin’s tenure of the Slade Professorship illustrated each and all of these different, but not necessarily conflicting,

functions. In the first instance he was no doubt elected as the man best able to combine them all. When he was re-appointed after an interval of some years, in 1883, his election was perhaps mainly due to the eminent-man theory of the office; but his first Professorship was very far indeed from being only titular or honorary. The fire which he promised in his letter to Acland was, so long as his health permitted, unflagging. He lectured; he taught; he founded and endowed a Drawing Mastership; he formed, presented, and catalogued collections to illustrate his subject. He spent infinite pains over the preparation of his more formal lectures, and during these eight years he published six volumes of them.<sup>1</sup> Interpreting his duties in a liberal sense, he considered further that “the real duty involved in my Oxford Professorship cannot be completely done by giving lectures in Oxford only, but that I ought also to give what guidance I may to travellers in Italy.”<sup>2</sup> In the execution of this self-imposed duty, he published three Italian Guides—*Mornings in Florence*, *St. Mark's Rest*, and a *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice*. It is sometimes alleged against Oxford Professors that they publish very little; Ruskin, it must be admitted, poured out with no niggard hand a whole library of books. Though strangely neglected by many of his critics, who are apt to judge Ruskin by isolated sentences from his earliest writings, the Oxford Lectures contain much of his matured thought on many artistic subjects, of his most careful research, and of his most ingenious and penetrating analysis. Upon the composition of his more formal lectures he spent infinite trouble. “I believe,” he wrote, in a note to *Ariadne Florentina* (§ 44), “that I am taking too much trouble in writing these lectures. This sentence has cost me, I suppose, first and last, about as many hours as there are lines in it.” And in conversation with a friend he said at a later date: “I have taken more pains with the Oxford Lectures than with anything else I have ever done, and I must say that I am immensely disappointed at their not being more constantly quoted and read. What have I ever done better than this?” And as he spoke he took down,” continues his friend, “a copy of *Aratra Pentelici* and read in his own impressive manner the concluding passages of one of those lectures.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Namely, *Lectures on Art*, *Aratra Pentelici*, *The Eagle's Nest*, *Ariadne Florentina*, *Love's Meimie*, and *Val d'Arno*. A single lecture, on *The Relation between Michael Angelo and Tintoret*, was also published as a pamphlet.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to *Mornings in Florence*.

<sup>3</sup> “A Conversation with Mr. Ruskin”: *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 21, 1884. The conversation was with Mr. M. H. Spielmann.

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The part that Ruskin played in the general education of the University by means of lectures and personal influence was also considerable. There are some Professors who, admirable though their research work may be, might yet as well be living in the moon for any vital influence which they exercise upon the studies or students of the University. The educational theory of professorships is by some persons dismissed as an obsolete survival from mediæval times; and Carlyle said that "the true University in these days is a Collection of Books." There is an element of truth in this point of view; but however wide may be the dispersion of books, there will always remain a place in the educational system for the Living Voice and the Living Teacher. Delightful as the Oxford Lectures are to read, yet as the Dean of Durham truly says, "no one can appreciate their effect, unless he was so fortunate as to hear them. One saw the same strange *afflatus* coming and going in his eye, his gestures, his voice."<sup>1</sup> "Many members of the University," says the Master of the Temple, "date from that period their first awakening to a sense of the beauty of Italian Art, and it may be doubted whether the interest of the University in painting and sculpture has ever again been so keen or so widely spread as it was then."<sup>2</sup> In arresting and stimulating attention, some of the less formal lectures were even more effective than those which Ruskin printed as books. The figure of the lecturer was striking, with ample gown—discarded often when its folds became too hopelessly involved—and the velvet college cap, one of the few remaining memorials of the "gentleman commoner." The quaintness of his costume—the light home-spun tweed, the double-breasted waistcoat, the ill-fitting and old-fashioned frock-coat, the amplitude of inevitable blue tie<sup>3</sup>—accurately reflected something of the originality of his mind and talk. If it were not for the peculiarly delicate hands and tapering fingers, denoting the artistic temperament, the Oxford Professor might have been taken for an old-fashioned country gentleman. In repose his face was at this time furrowed into sadness; but the blue eyes, piercing from beneath thick, bushy eyebrows, never ceased to shine with the fire of

<sup>1</sup> *Ruskin in Oxford and Other Studies*, by G. W. Kitchin, D.D., 1904, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> A contribution by the Rev. H. G. Woods, D.D., to the Rev. H. L. Thompson's *Memoir of Dean Liddell*, p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> The following is an item from "Affairs of the Master," as given in *Fors*, 1876: "July 16. Geoghegan (blue neckties) . . . £4 0 0." The blue ties offended Matthew Arnold. "Ruskin was there," he wrote in a letter describing a London dinner party (December 1877), "looking very slight and spiritual. I am getting to like him. He gains much by evening dress, plain black and white, and by his fancy being forbidden to range through the world of coloured cravats" (*Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. ii. p. 141). In fact Ruskin's fancy never strayed from true blue.

genius; whilst the smile that was never long absent when he lectured, lit up his face with the radiance of a singularly gracious and gentle spirit. His voice, though not very strong, had a peculiar *timbre*, which was at once penetrating and attractive. His old-fashioned pronunciation, with the peculiar roll of the r's, seemed in perfect harmony with the mediæval strain in his thought. "I have heard him lecture several times," says Mr. Mallock in his description of Ruskin as "Mr. Herbert" in *The New Republic*, "and that singular voice of his, which would often hold all the theatre breathless, haunts me still, sometimes. There was something strange and aerial in its exquisite modulations that seemed as if it came from a disconsolate spirit, hovering over the waters of Babylon and remembering Zion."<sup>1</sup> He was not a practised orator; and, as I have heard, he once told an audience, with a touch of his peculiar humour, that he had intended to deliver an extempore lecture, but that the trouble of writing an extempore lecture and then learning it by heart was too much for him, and so he would simply read what he had to say. He read magnificently. The quotations from Homer or from Chaucer or from some other favourite author were declaimed as no other public man of the time, except Gladstone, could have declaimed them. Passages, too, from his own earlier books came with new force and meaning when recited with the appropriate emphasis and intonation. But though Ruskin seldom, if ever, trusted a discourse entirely to improvisation, he also seldom adhered exclusively to the written text. From time to time some key was struck which took his attention, and then came an outburst of spontaneous rhetoric. An American writer, who spent a winter at Oxford as an unattached student, was bidden by the Censor "not to neglect your opportunity to hear the most eloquent man in England." He went to one of Ruskin's lectures, and thus reported what he heard:—

"To illustrate the honesty of mediæval art in contrast with modern sham, he pointed out an arabesque from a MS. of the Psalms, copied with coarse inaccuracy for a tailpiece in a current magazine. He made us see how the graceful lines were distorted, and the whole perfect design cheapened and falsified. 'And that's what you like, you English!' he railed, as he flung the offending magazine on the floor. Then taking up his manuscript Psalter

<sup>1</sup> *The New Republic*, ed. 1879, pp. 16, 17. The portrait of Mr. Herbert is perhaps the only one in the collection which is not a decided caricature; and "he is almost the only man in these days," we are told, "for whom I feel a real reverence—almost the only one of our teachers who seems to me to speak with the least breath of inspiration."



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he opened to the first psalm, and began to read it, giving both the majestic Vulgate Latin that was before him, and the English he knew so well. In a moment his spirit was rapt into an ecstasy. Striding back and forth behind his platform rail, he poured out a rhapsody of exalted thought in rhythmic phrase which no one could have attempted to transcribe, but which must have overwhelmed all who heard it with the thrilling consciousness of being in the immediate presence, and listening to the spontaneous exercise of creative genius."<sup>1</sup>

Some of Ruskin's courses—the Readings in Reynolds and in *Modern Painters*, for instance—were very largely trusted to this kind of improvisation, though his MS. notes show that particular phrases were often jotted down beforehand. He would begin on a quiet note, standing at the desk and reading with the sonorous dignity that befitted his author some pages from Sir Joshua's *Discourses*. Very often this was all of Reynolds that the lecture would contain. Some phrase suggested the line of thought. The desk would be abandoned, the gown thrown off; and striding up and down, Ruskin would pour forth his prophecies. A description by Mr. Oscar Browning of a lecture at Eton gives, with some exaggeration,<sup>2</sup> the general effect on perhaps some of his hearers:—

“Shortly after the commencement manuscript and notes were put aside, the lecturer gathered his singing robes around him and chanted a long-drawn dithyramb which held his audience spell-bound. No one could tell what it was about, whither it started, or whence it came. It had no beginning or end, no form or substance, no argument or conclusion, nor could you remember it when it was over. But the row of boys sat as if entranced, hanging on every word, unconscious of the flight of time, and when it ended they woke as from a dream. They had been lifted into a higher sphere of thought and emotion, but, like St. Paul of old, whether in the body or out of the body they could not tell.”<sup>3</sup>

Another feature of the lectures which gave special interest to the Spoken Lecture, as distinct from the Printed Word, was their illustration by means of drawings, diagrams, and pictures. The eye was at every turn called in to confirm the lecturer's appeal to the imagination

<sup>1</sup> “Ruskin as an Oxford Lecturer,” by James Manning Bruce, in the *Century Magazine*, February 1898, p. 594.

<sup>2</sup> One of several lectures which Ruskin gave at Eton is printed in a later volume; it was discursive, but hardly so indefinite as in Mr. Browning's recollection of this occasion.

<sup>3</sup> “Personal Recollections of John Ruskin,” in *St. George*, 1903, vol. vi. pp. 141–142.

or the reason; and on the preparation of these examples Ruskin (as we shall see more fully in the next volume) spent the greatest pains. In the present edition of his Works, a large number of the illustrations which were shown at the lectures and placed in the permanent Art Collection are reproduced—some in the passages of the text where they were referred to, while more than fifty are brought together in Volume XXI. to illustrate the Catalogues of the Collection.

The specimens which Ruskin was in the habit of exhibiting in his lectures may be divided into three classes—standard and permanent works of art; drawings of his own of particular places or objects; and diagrams, copies, and enlargements prepared specially to illustrate or enforce some passing point. Many specimens of the first and second kind, and a few of the third, may still be seen in the cabinets of the Ruskin Drawing School (see next volume). For purposes of illustration Ruskin had the University galleries as well as his own collections to draw upon, and any student who attended all the Slade Professor's lectures had the advantage of examining at one time or another a large and unique gallery of art under the immediate guidance of the great critic. The large table in the theatre and the wall behind were generally covered with drawings and pictures; most of these would be referred to in the course of the lecture, whilst at the end there would be a rush to the front, and the Professor would hold an informal "class" (as the University Extensionists call it) for further explanation and criticism of the pictures to such students as cared to stay. The ingenuity expended in the preparation of temporary illustrations gave additional piquancy to the lectures. The plate in *Aratra Pentelici* (p. 294) of a Greek Apollo and the British self-made man, illustrates the kind of whimsical effect at which Ruskin often aimed. But only a few of the diagrams and pictures exhibited at the lecture-room have been reproduced. Mr. Macdonald, the talented and zealous master of the Ruskin Drawing School, might have preserved a large collection of them, for it was upon his willing hands that the work of preparing the Professor's topical illustrations mostly fell. Often amongst the pictures placed behind the lecturer there would be one with its face turned to the wall, or two or three would be brought in at the last moment, carefully covered up, by Ruskin's servant. The audience would always smile in anticipation on such occasions, for they knew that some pretty jest or curious fancy was in store. Great was the amusement on one occasion when a hidden treasure was disclosed in the shape of a sketch from Tintoret's "Paradise," which the Professor—by chance or design—held out with the wrong side up.

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“Ah, well,” he said, joining in the general laughter, “what does it matter? for in Tintoret’s ‘Paradise’ you have heaven all round you.” In one of the lectures on *The Art of England* there was a characteristic incident. Ruskin was contrasting the way in which modern French art looks at the sky with that in which Turner saw and drew “the pure traceries of the vault of morning.” “See,” he said, “what the French artistic imagination makes of it,” and a drawing done by Mr. Macdonald from a French hand-book was disclosed, showing the clouds grouped into the face of a mocking and angry fiend. When the audience had had their look and their laugh, Mr. Macdonald modestly proceeded to turn his sketch with its back to the wall again. “No, no!” interposed the lecturer, “keep it there, and it shall permanently remain in your school, as a type of the loathsome and lying spirit of defamation which studies man only in the skeleton and nature only in ashes.”<sup>1</sup> I recall another effective piece of what may be called the lecturer’s stage-play. Ruskin was expatiating, as was his wont, on the vandalism of the modern world.<sup>2</sup> On an easel beside him was a water-colour drawing of Leicester by Turner. “The old stone bridge is picturesque,” he said, “isn’t it? But of course you want something more ‘imposing’ nowadays. So you shall have it.” And taking his paint-box and brush he rapidly sketched in on the glass what is known in modern specifications as “a handsome iron structure.” “Then,” he continued, “you will want, of course, some tall factory chimneys, and I will give them to you galore.” Which he proceeded to do in like fashion. “The blue sky of heaven was pretty, but you cannot have everything, you know.” And he painted clouds of black smoke over Turner’s sky. “Your ‘improvements,’” he went on, “are marvellous ‘triumphs of modern industry,’ I know; but somehow they do not seem to produce nobler men and women, and no modern town is complete, you will admit, without a gaol and a lunatic asylum to crown it. So here they are for you.” By which time not an inch of the Turner drawing was left visible under the “improvements” painted upon the glass. “But for my part,” said Ruskin, taking his sponge, and with one pass of the hand wiping away those modern improvements against which he has inveighed in so many printed volumes—“for my part, I prefer the old.”

Such reminiscences will, perhaps, serve to explain the vivid impression which Ruskin’s lectures made on those who heard them. It was the

<sup>1</sup> This example remains in the School: see *Art of England*, § 184. The above account is my note of the lecture as delivered at the time.

<sup>2</sup> In one of the lectures called “Readings in *Modern Painters*”: see Vol. XXII.

unflagging vivacity of the lecturer—his complete absorption in the subject, the zest with which he admired or denounced, his transparent sincerity and his intensity of conviction—that made the Living Voice so potent. Nor was it only on younger and more impressionable minds that Ruskin's eloquence cast its spell. "Acland has come in to say," he writes to his mother after one of the earlier *Lectures on Art*, "that a very hard and stern man had been so much moved by my talk to-day that he could not speak for near an hour afterwards."<sup>1</sup> But the popularity and the topics of Ruskin's lectures by no means pleased everybody. "My University friends came to me," he says of his appeal to young Englishmen at the end of the Inaugural Lecture, "with grave faces, to remonstrate against irrelevant and Utopian topics of that nature being introduced in lectures on art."<sup>2</sup> The discontent among some of the other lecturers in the University is reflected at second hand in some vivacious letters of J. R. Green, the historian:—

(To W. BOYD DAWKINS, *March 5, 1870.*)

"I hear odd news from Oxford about Ruskin and his lectures. The last was attended by more than 1000 people, and he electrified the Dons by telling them that a chalk-stream did more for the education of the people than their prim 'national school with its well-taught doctrine of Baptism and gabbled Catechism.' Also 'that God was in the poorest man's cottage, and that it was advisable He should be well housed.' I think we were ten years too soon for the fun!"

(To E. A. FREEMAN, UNDATED.)

"Everybody is going in 'for strong forms.' Ruskin lectures on Art at Oxford, and tells 1000 people (Stubbs gets 20) that a chalk-stream does more for education than 100 National Schools 'with all their doctrines of Baptismal Regeneration into the bargain.' Also that cottages ought to be repaired, because 'God lives in the poor man's hovel, and it's as well He should be well housed.' To all which, Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Houses listen plaintively."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "February 1870" is the date; the day is not given.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 42, and compare Letter 68. See also *The Pleasures of England*, § 3. Mr. Mallock pleasantly satirises such remonstrances in *The New Republic*. "What a dreadful blowing-up Mr. Herbert gave us," he makes one of the characters (Lady Ambrose) say. "Now that, you know, I think is all very well in a sermon, but in a lecture, when the things are supposed to be taken more or less literally, I think it is a little out of place" (p. 365).

<sup>3</sup> *Letters of J. R. Green*, p. 246. The passage in Ruskin's lectures to which he refers seems to be §§ 60, 61. The letter to Freeman must have saddened or angered the recipient, for "among the authors whom he most disliked were Plato, Carlyle, and Ruskin, in no one of whom could he see any merit" (*Bryce's Studies in Contemporary Biography*, 1903, p. 269).

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To the lecturer himself “the irrelevant topics” were the very essence of what he had to say. He had promised Acland and Liddell, we have seen, to be on his good behaviour; but, as he wrote to Lady Mount-Temple at the same date (September 4, 1869), he was not going to Oxford to be only a drawing master. He did, indeed, devote himself industriously to the narrower duties; but with him, as we have seen increasingly in our chronological study of his work and thought, the teaching of art was the teaching of everything. The Inaugural Oxford Lectures fill their organic place in the body of his work, growing, through the *Stones of Venice*, out of *Unto this Last*, and leading on, in their turn, to *Fors Clavigera*. He had taught in the first book “the dependence of all human work, or edifice, for its beauty, on the happy life of the workman.” He laid down in the second book “the laws of that life itself, and its dependence on the Sun of Justice.” He went to Oxford to preach the necessity that such life “should be led, and the gracious laws of beauty and labour recognized, by the upper, no less than the lower, classes of England”; and, finally, “it is simply one part of the practical work I have to do in Art-teaching,” he said in *Fors Clavigera*, “to bring somewhere [the conditions of fine art] into existence.”<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, in the exercise of his professorial duties, did not neglect research; but he was also a missionary. It was his business to claim for Art its full place among the Humanities; and where, more properly than from an Oxford Chair, could his protest have been made, on one side, against the commercial Philistinism of the outer world, and, on the other, against the over-specialism of merely intellectual studies which sometimes dominates the lecture-rooms of a University?<sup>2</sup>

Lectures and classes were not the only channels through which Ruskin exerted some humanising and stimulating influence in the University. He mixed at times in the social life of the place, and he came in personal touch with many of the younger men. During the first year of his Professorship he made his home with Acland, living with him as one of the family. “He used to say that he could write unusually well there in his room, a quiet one at the back, as Mrs. Acland—‘Mama’ he called her—made him so extremely

<sup>1</sup> Letters 9 and 78.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. J. A. Hobson in his *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, has some suggestive remarks in this connexion: “The rough shaking of academic proprieties was not one of the least services Mr. Ruskin has rendered in his life. The shock was particularly needed, for one of the chief intellectual dangers of the age is a too precise specialism, which, by sharply marking out into carefully defined provinces the domain of learning, runs a constant risk of losing the wide standard of humanity, and cultivating triviality under the false name of thoroughness” (p. 263).

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comfortable, and he had nothing to disturb him, for he could not waste his time looking out of the windows, since the outlook over the blank brick wall and the chimney-pots was the ugliest that he had ever seen.”<sup>1</sup> He objected to being lionised, and shrunk, as we have heard, from frequent dining out; though he was often to be met at the Deanery — a reminiscence of an encounter there with Disraeli is given in *Præterita*<sup>2</sup>—and sometimes, too, at Jowett’s table. “I dined at Balliol yesterday,” he writes to his mother (March 1870), “with the Dean of Westminster and Lady Augusta Stanley, and they seemed to like me.” Jowett, in later years, came to know and like Ruskin well.<sup>3</sup> But at this period, we are told, “his attitude towards Ruskin was hesitating.” He was “not insensible to the genius of his writings, or the noble devotion of his character,” but “he was suspicious of æstheticism” and had no sympathy with Ruskin’s economic ideas or schemes. Ruskin’s enthusiastic manner, too, did not appeal to the Master. “Once after dinner, when Ruskin was seated in Jowett’s drawing-room talking to a lady, Jowett, who stood with other friends in front, suddenly broke into a hearty ringing laugh. Ruskin sprang up and caught him by both hands: ‘Master, how delighted I am to hear you; I wish I could laugh like that!’ Upon which all the room laughed—except Jowett.”<sup>4</sup>

In daytime “the Professor” was often to be seen at the Bodleian—copying from illuminated MSS. shown him by his friend, H. O. Coxe, the librarian, or “studying Renaissance” with his “antagonisticest” pupil, Mrs. Mark Pattison.<sup>5</sup> But Ruskin felt that he ought to come into closer relation with the corporate life of the University, and after a year’s residence in Acland’s house, or at Abingdon, he went into College. How this came about has been told in a charming paper by Mr. J. W. Oddie, Fellow of Corpus:<sup>6</sup>—

“Early in 1870 Professor Ruskin visited Corpus. He came to see the illuminated manuscripts at the invitation of a pupil who happened to be a tutor of the College at that time. . . . While walking round the Fellows’

<sup>1</sup> Mr. J. B. Atlay’s *Memoir of Sir Henry Acland*, p. 383.

<sup>2</sup> In iii., §§ 33 *seq.*

<sup>3</sup> See Vol. XVIII. pp. lx.–lxi.

<sup>4</sup> *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, by Evelyn Abbott and Lewis Campbell, 1897, vol. ii. p. 75. At the end of “Mr. Herbert’s” lecture in *The New Republic*, “after the fire, from one of the side boxes came a still small voice: ‘Very poor taste—very poor taste.’” The voice was “Dr. Jenkinson’s” (p. 360).

<sup>5</sup> Memoir prefixed to Lady Dilke’s *Book of the Spiritual Life*, 1905, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> “Ruskin at Corpus,” in the *Pelican Record*, vol. ii., No. 4, June 1894, pp. 101–107. In the following number, pp. 134–137, there was a continuation of the story by another Fellow of the College, Mr. C. Plummer.