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# The Works of John Ruskin

VOLUME 34: THE STORM-CLOUD OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

JOHN RUSKIN  
EDITED BY EDWARD TYAS COOK  
AND ALEXANDER WEDDERBURN



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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](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108008822](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108008822)

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This edition first published 1908  
This digitally printed version 2009

ISBN 978-1-108-00882-2 Paperback

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EDITED BY

E. T. COOK

AND

ALEXANDER WEDDERBURN



LONDON

GEORGE ALLEN, 156, CHARING CROSS ROAD

NEW YORK: LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1908

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00882-2 - The Works of John Ruskin, Volume 34

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VOLUME XXXIV

THE STORM-CLOUD OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY  
ON THE OLD ROAD  
ARROWS OF THE CHACE  
RUSKINIANA

THE STORM-CLOUD OF THE  
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*Note.*—The drawings by Ruskin given in this volume have not hitherto appeared. For Figs. 1-5, see p. xxvii. The facsimile of the "Page of the Greek Gospels" appeared in W. G. Collingwood's *Ruskin Relics*, 1903, p. 201.



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00882-2 - The Works of John Ruskin, Volume 34

John Ruskin

Frontmatter

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## INTRODUCTION TO VOL. XXXIV

THIS volume contains (I.) the lectures of 1884 upon *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, held over for reasons of space from the last volume. (II.) Such of Ruskin's scattered pieces, and (III.) letters to the press, as have not been given in previous volumes, together with (IV.) various Ruskiniana. For the second and third Parts of the volume, the titles have been retained which Ruskin chose for similar collections published in his lifetime—*On the Old Road* and *Arrows of the Chace*. In each case, however, the present collection contains some matter which was not included, and omits some which was included, in the books thus entitled. It omits much, because many of the scattered pieces and letters have, in the chronological arrangement of this edition, been already given in previous volumes. It includes much which appeared (or was traced) subsequently to the publication of *On the Old Road* in 1885 and of *Arrows of the Chace* in 1880. Full particulars on these matters will be found in the Bibliographical Notes (pp. 88, 462).

## “THE STORM-CLOUD”

In the Appendix to his Oxford lectures on *The Art of England*, Ruskin, being released from his self-imposed restraint,<sup>1</sup> mixed a little vinegar with the oil; and in the course of general reflections on the deficiencies of that Art, laid some of the blame upon the atmospheric conditions in which modern landscape-painters live.<sup>2</sup> These remarks bring us to the first Part of this volume, containing the lectures which Ruskin gave at the London Institution in February 1884 on “The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century.” In reading these lectures, it is well to distinguish Ruskin's account of phenomena from any theory of their cause. At the time when he first published the lectures,

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. XXXIII. p. lxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 397 *seq.*

they encountered much ridicule. He had not clearly propounded any theory, or at any rate not any physical theory, of the phenomena in question. He contented himself with ascribing them to the Devil; and, wrapping himself as it were in the gloom, the Prophet denounced woe upon a wicked and perverse generation.<sup>1</sup> There was, as we shall presently see, a perfectly sober, solid, material, and accurate sense in which Ruskin's words were true. But he was not fully conscious of it himself, or he did not choose to make it explicit; and his readers, not penetrating to the true cause, were led by Ruskin's prophecies of woe to throw doubt and derision even upon the phenomena on which he based them. The newspapers, as he says in his Preface, "scouted his assertion of radical change, during recent years, in weather aspect as imaginary or insane" (p. 7).

Nothing could be worse-founded than such criticism. Ruskin was before all things a close and accurate observer of natural phenomena. For fifty years, he says, he had made patient and accurately recorded observations of the sky. Every reader of this edition of his Works now knows how true this assertion was. Few men have ever studied so many sunsets, and perhaps no man has ever studied so many sunrises, as Ruskin. He saw them and he did not let them go; he "kept them bottled," as he said in an aside in the lecture, "like his father's sherries"<sup>2</sup>—bottled in minute descriptions in his diary, or memoranda in his sketch-books. It was in 1871 that he "first recognized the clouds brought by the plague-wind as distinct in character." The observation was noted in *Fors*, and is repeated in *The Storm-Cloud* (p. 32). From that time forward, he says, his attention "never relaxed in its record of the phenomena." His diaries are full of it and many notes upon it occur in his books.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to find that another artist-observer, who had also been in the habit for many years of noting cloud-phenomena, had been

<sup>1</sup> In this connexion, Ruskin's notes on the Minor Prophets may be compared: see below, pp. 685, 686 (Nos. 6 and 22).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from a notice of the lecture in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, February 5, 1884. Compare Vol. VII. p. xxvi.

<sup>3</sup> See *Fors*, Letter 53, May 1875 (Vol. XXVIII. p. 317), and General Index. The extracts from his diary in *The Storm-Cloud* are as follow:—

Bolton, July 4, 1875	. . . . .	page 30
Coniston, June 22, 1876	. . . . .	" 36
" June 25-6, 1876	. . . . .	" 35
" July 16, 1876	. . . . .	" 36
" Aug. 13, 1879	. . . . .	" 37
" Aug. 17, 1879	. . . . .	" 38
" Aug. 6, 1880	. . . . .	" 23 n.
Sallanches, Sept. 11, 1882	. . . . .	" 70
Coniston, Feb. 22, 1883	. . . . .	" 38

## INTRODUCTION

XXV

struck, as Ruskin was, by "the storm-cloud of the nineteenth century." Mr. G. D. Leslie, R.A., in his pleasant volume of country notes, thus wrote:—

"No doubt you have read the two lectures by Professor Ruskin which he entitles 'The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century.' In them is described, in the most wonderfully accurate manner, that sort of blight of bad weather which seems to have fallen upon us in these latter days. His description of what he calls the plague, or devil, wind is singularly correct; its character, persistence, and effects being dwelt on with that marvellous power of language for which he is so famous. One thing which he points out as characteristic of this wind is that its baneful nature does not seem to be influenced by the quarter from which it blows. Most of us can remember when an east wind was dry and cold, a south wind warm and wet, a west wind bright and clear, and a north wind bright and cold, but now we seem to have dark, cold winds persistently recurring from all quarters alike. The Professor allows that there are intervals of fine and even lovely weather, but the phenomena is in the ever-returning spells of this plague wind. A few years ago this wind was of a damp and rainy character, but certainly during this year and the last it has been one of cold and drought. In all years it has been attended with darkness and gloom; the clouds being, as he describes them, of paltry shapelessness. I have been noting in my diary for the last two years the state of the weather, and find that the wind in question has been blowing with its curiously pertinacious character almost entirely from the north and north-east. Even when, in the winter, we had the wind from the south, it was not accompanied by warmth or rain, some of the severest frosts having taken place when the wind was south. I have waited in vain for any explanations, or even recognition, from the meteorological experts of this singular state of affairs. These gentlemen would, of course, pay little attention to Mr. Ruskin's lectures, regarding them, no doubt, as unworthy of any serious scientific consideration; but for all that I am convinced, from my own experiences, the Professor never wrote anything that was more true in fact and description."

And, again, a few days later:—

"I have been particularly struck with the colourless aspect of the north-east wind lately; there is always a white haze or glare round the sun, which seems to bleach its rays, and when a few thin beggarly clouds pass over, it appears, as the Professor so happily expresses it, exactly like a bad half-crown at the bottom of a basin of soap-suds."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Marco*, by G. D. Leslie, R.A., 1893, pp. 201–203, 209–210.

Ruskin's observations of the phenomena of "the storm-cloud" were, then, perfectly accurate. Nor is there any mystery about their origin. The Devil is every bit as black as Ruskin painted him; he is Smoke—smoke, mixed with damp. "Air currents meet the gaseous products of combustion, mixed with minute material particles, and are hindered or diverted in their course thereby, and move forward, dirty, irregular, and scattered. It would appear as though the upper air did not always have time to become cleansed each day from the gases and carbon which rise into it; there is not enough free space at hand, and an unclean atmosphere blocks what was once the serene expanse of the sky." The writer from whose recent work on the subject I am quoting,<sup>1</sup> adds that industrial statistics fully bear out the date which Ruskin fixes for the growth of the phenomena in question; the storm-cloud thickened just when the consumption of coal went up by leaps and bounds, both in this country and in the industrialised parts of central Europe. The distance which the blight of the plague-wind will travel is very great. "On Coronation Night," Mr. Collingwood has recorded,<sup>2</sup> "I saw it trailing from Barrow and Carnforth up the Lune valley as far as Tebay, always low and level, leaving the upper hills clear, perfectly continuous and distinct from the mist of water. This winter (1903), from the top of Wetherlam on a brilliant frosty day, I saw it gradually invade the Lake District from the south-east; the horizontal, clean-cut upper surface at about 2000 feet; the body of it dun and semi-transparent; its thick veil fouling the little cotton-woolly clouds that nestled in the cover of the Kirkstone group, quite separate from the smoke-pall; and by sunset it had reached to Dungeon Gill, leaving the Bow Fell valleys clear. Coming down by moonlight, I found the dales in a dry, cold fog, and heard that there had been no sunshine at Coniston that afternoon." Ruskin, as the conclusion of his lectures, says that the plague-wind and the storm-cloud will only be removed when men sincerely pray that "God may be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us." The investigations of meteorologists and economists confirm his words; it is the Devil of Smoke that needs to be exorcised, if the earth is to yield her increase.

The text of *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* here given follows that of the first (and hitherto only) edition. But the sections have now been numbered; and in Lecture II., which consisted largely of Notes on Lecture I., the necessary references have been inserted.

<sup>1</sup> *The Destruction of Daylight: a Study in the Smoke Problem*, by J. W. Graham, Principal of Dalton Hall, University of Manchester (George Allen, 1907).

<sup>2</sup> *Ruskin Relics*, p. 56. Compare Graham, p. 13.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00882-2 - The Works of John Ruskin, Volume 34

John Ruskin

Frontmatter

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## INTRODUCTION

xxvii

The *manuscript* and corrected proofs of the greater part of *The Storm-Cloud* are at Brantwood.

A comparison of these with the final text reveals Ruskin's usual care in revision. A few notes are added from the MS. (see, *e.g.*, pp. 9, 20).

The illustrations, now included in the lecture, are reprinted from the report of it in the *Art Journal*. The lecture itself had been illustrated by coloured enlargements from Ruskin's sketches, which were thrown on a screen by the lime-light. Some of the enlargements were made for him by Mr. Arthur Severn (§ 26); others, by Mr. Collingwood (§ 40). "Such colours! such brushes! such—everything—waiting!" Ruskin had written to his aide-de-camp, who was set to work with Messrs. Newman's extra-luminous water-colours.<sup>1</sup> For the abstract of the lecture (by Mr. Wedderburn) in the *Art Journal*, woodcuts were made by Mr. J. D. Cooper from the drawings, and these are here included (Plates I. and II. and Fig. 3).

## "ON THE OLD ROAD"

Under this title, Ruskin's miscellanies were collected and edited for him by Mr. Wedderburn in 1885. It was "A Collection of Miscellaneous Essays, Pamphlets, etc., published 1834–1885," and a large number of the miscellanies belonged to Ruskin's earlier periods of literary activity. These earlier pieces have all been printed in the volumes to which they belonged in point of the time of their composition. The present collection comprises fourteen pieces which were published at various dates between 1871 and 1888. The last of them is also the last, with two exceptions,<sup>2</sup> that Ruskin wrote.

The autobiographical reminiscence entitled *My First Editor* appropriately introduced the volumes of miscellanies issued in 1885, and it is here again placed first (pp. 93–104). The reminiscence, written in 1878, is of William Henry Harrison, the faithful friend and literary mentor of Ruskin's early days of authorship. A notice of him has been given in the Introduction to Ruskin's *Poems* (Vol. II.), and many letters from him and to him have been published,<sup>3</sup> which illustrate

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Work of John Ruskin*, 1900, p. 375.

<sup>2</sup> The Epilogue to *Modern Painters* (September 1888) and the conclusion of *Præterita* (June 1889).

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Vol. II. p. 27 *n.*; Vol. III. p. lii. *n.*; Vol. VIII. p. 275; and General Index.

what Ruskin here says (p. 93) of Harrison's care in reading proofs, and criticising the author's style.

The piece was written by way of preface to a series of Reminiscences by Harrison, published after his death<sup>1</sup> in the *Dublin University Magazine* (1878). Though not himself an author, except in a very mild way, Harrison lived near the rose. As editor of *Friendship's Offering* and Registrar of the Royal Literary Fund,<sup>2</sup> he came across many men of distinction, in whose reflected radiance he sunned himself joyfully, as Ruskin describes.<sup>3</sup>

*My First Editor* is one of the most charming of Ruskin's shorter pieces; it shows the same serenity of temper, the same felicity in humorous reminiscence, and the same delicate skill in character-drawing that were afterwards conspicuous in *Præterita*. It is of peculiar interest in a connected study of Ruskin's writings, because this chapter—exhibiting, as it does, so complete a mastery of all his literary arts and graces—was written almost on the eve of his serious illness in 1878.<sup>4</sup>

The second and third pieces in this volume—on *The Range of Intellectual Conception* (pp. 107–111) and *The Nature and Authority of Miracle* (pp. 115–125) respectively—were papers read by Ruskin to the Metaphysical Society in 1871 and 1873. A third paper, read to the same Society in 1875—on *Social Policy*—was included by Ruskin in *A Joy for Ever*, and has already been printed.<sup>5</sup> The Society was founded by Tennyson and Sir James Knowles in 1869, its original members including Dean Stanley, James Martineau, R. H. Hutton, Ward, Bagehot, Froude, Gladstone, Manning, Father Dalgairns, Hinton, Henry Sidgwick, and Mark Pattison.<sup>6</sup> Ruskin was

<sup>1</sup> He had died in August 1874. See Vol. XXIV. p. xxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. XX. p. liv.; and below, § 10.

<sup>3</sup> One of his reminiscences is worth disinterring from the *Magazine*, because it is the original authority for an interesting anecdote about Turner:—

“I used to meet Turner at the table of Mr. Ruskin, the father of the art critic. The first occasion was a few days after the appearance of a notice in the *Athenæum*, of a picture of Turner's which was therein characterised as ‘Eggs and Spinach.’ This stuck in the great painter's throat, and as we were returning together in Mr. Ruskin's carriage Turner ejaculated the obnoxious phrase every five minutes. I told him that if I had attained to his eminence in art I should not care a rush for what any one said of me. But the only reply I could get was, ‘Eggs and Spinach.’” (May 1878, p. 546.)

<sup>4</sup> See Vol. XXV. p. xxiv.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. XVI. pp. 161–169.

<sup>6</sup> The full list, with other particulars of the Society, may be read in *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son*, 1897, vol. ii. p. 167. Tennyson's poem “The Higher Pantheism” was read at the first meeting of the Society (*ibid.*, p. 168). To Dalgairns, Ruskin refers in a letter to Professor Norton of November 10, 1870; for Hinton, see *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 75, § 10 (Vol. XXIX. p. 67).]