

CHAPTER 1

The Social and Educational Thought of John Ruskin: The Victorian Milieu

No other writer of the Victorian age has left such a bewildering legacy as John Ruskin. A critic of art and architecture, Ruskin found that he could not divorce his aesthetic studies from their relationship to morality, to the nature of society, to politics and to education. This study is concerned with showing the essential unity of his aesthetic, social and educational thought and practice. As a contribution to the history of educational thought, this work is concerned with the inter-relation of Ruskin's social theory and his educational concerns and practices rather than a discussion of Ruskin's ideas in the light of "concepts of education" or an attempt to trace in detail Ruskin's influence on education which would constitute another thesis in itself.

It is surprising that Ruskin, such a major figure in Victorian intellectual life, has not received wider attention as far as his role as an educator or his writings on education are concerned. While Ruskin was still alive (but not capable of intellectual effort) William Jolly, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and President of the Glasgow Ruskin Society, compiled Ruskin on Education (1894),¹ a collection of paraphrases and extracts from "the Master" which were meant as an inspiration to teachers. Efforts were made to have the book suppressed because Ruskin had not authorised it.² Indeed Ruskin himself had wanted to issue an anthology of his own pronouncements on education.³

The only published book to date on Ruskin's educational thought is Hilda Hagstotz's 1942 study, The Educational Theories of John Ruskin,

which is essentially a working through of most of the entries under Education in the concordance to Ruskin's collected edition (Volume 39 of the Works).⁴

Articles on Ruskin's educational views are also not numerous.

G. W. Kitchin's "Ruskin in Oxford"⁵ is mainly autobiographical.

Uncritical essays by disciples such as J. P. Faunthorpe⁶ and J.L. Paton⁷ appeared in the Saint George magazine, the organ of Ruskin Society, in the first decade of this century, but apart from J. A.

Russell's⁸ and Francis X Roellinger's⁹ subsequent use of Ruskin as a spring-board for discussing their own educational ideas, it was not till Margaret Spence's¹⁰ publication of a collection of Ruskin's

letters concerning the establishment and administration of his educational organization, the Guild of St. George, did interest quicken in Ruskin as an educator. This is reflected in Judith Hick's thoughtful article,¹¹ which prepared the way for future research.

A new full scale assessment of Ruskin's social and educational thought is now timely and this is what this thesis claims to do. The most daunting task for the Ruskin student is coming to grips with the thirty-nine volumes of the Works. It is easy to sympathize with Quentin Bell, who in the introduction to the second edition of his study, Ruskin, claimed that "confronted by the task of writing about him I saw that now at last I must actually read Ruskin. And so feeling like one who wades out in the cold waters of the Charnel with France as his destination I took the plunge ..." ¹²

Ruskin published works through almost the whole of Victoria's reign; indeed Ruskin and the Queen were almost exact contemporaries, being born in the same year, 1819, and Ruskin dying in 1900, a year before Victoria. Of the three periods of Victoria's reign, roughly corresponding to three generations and to the three periods of

Ruskin's development from art critic to social critic to utopian theorist, it is the middle period which is quintessentially the Victorian 'high noon',¹³ beginning brightly in 1851 with the opening of the Crystal Palace (which Ruskin detested) and ending sombrely with the agricultural depression of 1873.

It was during the early Victorian period that Ruskin published the first volume of Modern Painters in 1843. Immediate recognition from the leading literary figures of the day was given for Ruskin's wonderful visual gifts. At one blow, Ruskin had established an enthusiastic audience for himself. Four more volumes of Modern Painters were to appear, culminating in 1860, in between the writing of other major aesthetic works such as The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849) and The Stones of Venice (1851-1853). During the first period of Ruskin's career, his audience readily accepted Ruskin's doctrine of beauty which was intimately bound up with the love of nature and a spiritual universe.

As Ruskin's work developed, he became increasingly concerned with the social implications of the art and architecture that he had described in such loving detail. Ruskin's audience complained of being given the stones of political economy instead of the bread of art criticism. Despite his political books selling less and less during the second period of his career, the 1860s, Ruskin persisted in producing much polemical literature on society, economics and education such as Unto This Last and Time and Tide, only to seek a further outlet in his plans for what Ruskin believed to be a realizable utopia, the Guild of St. George, whose members by tithing their income would buy land and develop it according to Ruskin's teachings.

All Ruskin's frenetic literary production (except his autobiography) in the final third stage of his active career from 1870 to 1889 is interpreted in this study as the educational outgrowth of his St. George project. Whether it be the idiosyncratic ninety-six letters to the working men of England, Fors Clavigera, which startled Ruskin's readers from 1871 to 1884; or the variety of what Ruskin called "grammars" devoted to geology, botany, drawing, prosody and other subjects; or Ruskin's lectures as Slade Professor of Art at Oxford - all these activities, whatever their ostensible subject, have educational intentions and implications. Sesame and Lilies, and The Ethics of the Dust however, are Ruskin's only works which could be classed as texts on education: Ruskin did not write a great deal on education, in the narrow sense of the word.

Another major problem confronting the Ruskin student is trying to find a path through the maze of differing accounts of Victorian England, particularly in relationship to social class. But, if the student forgets the mid-Victorian world which was the object of so much of Ruskin's criticism, the point of much of his social and educational thought is lost. What kind of a society, what pervasive ideals and new developments made up mid-Victorian England and to which Ruskin served as a latter day prophet?

Change and mobility were particularly pronounced in mid-Victorian England and indeed progress was part of the official ideology of the period. There had been a remarkable growth in population: between the censuses of 1811 and 1871 the population increased from ten to nearly twenty-three million.¹⁴ Moreover, this population could now readily move from one part of the country to another because by 1850 with ever advancing industrialization in England the basic railway

network of some six thousand miles was in existence¹⁵ and by 1889 this was increased to fifteen thousand miles of track.¹⁶ As well as a new race of railway workers that had sprung into being there were other significant developments and changes in occupation. For example, there was a very rapid expansion in the number of white collar clerks which doubled in the 1860s and again in the 1870s¹⁷ and which helped put pressure on the ever growing demands for the extension of state education.

Because of the orderly Victorian passion for statistics the counting of heads or railway mileage in that era is not open to serious dispute; what has been questioned in recent years, however, is the claim that England, particularly in the mid-Victorian period, which has been characterized as "the classical period of British industrial capitalism",¹⁸ was an age of continuous economic prosperity.

Admittedly the English working classes were strangely quiescent during the period 1850 - 1870 - a fact which puzzled¹⁹ Marx and Engels and is still not adequately explained by social historians today - and this has often been interpreted as the result of the condition of the English working classes prospering along with the advances of industrialism whereby Britain's world monopoly position in this period had been enhanced by the consolidation of mid Victorian capitalism through the diffusion of mechanization and new materials and techniques to many parts of the economy.²⁰ Certainly the hunger of millions during the times of massive unemployment in the 1840s had abated and by comparison mid Victorian England seemed the promised land. But there was still a great deal of misery beneath the surface of the period 1851 - 1873. To emphasize the appalling hardships of many of England's subjects in this period Ruskin had

passages detailing their misery printed in red in his writings as though to emphasize the blood of workers leached away by inhuman conditions.

While Ruskin always used instances of particular human suffering in his polemics against Victorian capitalism, recent economic historians have analyzed general economic trends in this period and have presented considerable evidence to show that real wages increased less than 33 per cent between 1850 and 1873²¹ and 'while economic growth was significant in this period as a whole, it must have been extra-ordinarily great at times in 1853 - 6, 1863 - 5 and 1871 - 3 as it seems to have been very limited at others.'²² Even W. L. Burn whose study of mid Victorian society, The Age of Equipoise, has as its central thesis the stability and confidence of this period of English history, admits that "it is not to be doubted that great numbers of the labouring classes lived precariously at best and abominably at the worst."²³ Furthermore, another conservative²⁴ historian, G. Kitson Clark, claims that "compared to what was provided in Prussia, in Switzerland or in France, what educational facilities that were provided for the mass of people were disastrously meagre and poor."²⁵ To make matters worse, this was happening at a time when the expansion of industry was being accompanied, as Ruskin never lost an opportunity to point out, by the degradation of old crafts which had been the source of workers' pride.²⁶

The various tensions and crises in Victorian England cannot be divorced from an examination of class structure in the period. Although dividing people into different groups has existed as long as societies themselves²⁷ it was only in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, argued Asa Briggs,²⁸ that social class as a term comes

into its own. Indeed by the time of the Victorian era, claimed Ivan Reid,²⁹ "class consciousness" or "awareness" were clearly established: "it was not by chance that Marx chose England as the model on which to base the development of his ideas."³⁰

Discussion of class in Victorian England is a complex problem indeed. Historians posit different numbers of class models in nineteenth century England: for example, John Foster and E.P. Thompson (two-class), H. J. Perkin (four-class) R. S. Neale (five-class) and Gertrude Himmelfarb (anti-class) models.³¹ The model used in this study is a traditional five class model (upper class, upper middle class, middle class, lower middle class, working class) rather than R.S. Neale's version of the five class model which has an upper class, a two-fold middle class and a two-fold working class.³²

What is at least clear from this almost Slough of Despond is Asa Briggs's analysis of the growing self consciousness of the middle classes as they measured themselves against the dominant land-owning aristocracy.³³ Indeed by the mid nineteenth century middle class values had come to dominate English society: even Victoria and Albert, at the very top of society embodied middle class values. The decadence associated with George IV and his circle had now seemed long passed although there remained sections of the aristocracy and the "racing set" among the upper middle classes who remained as unaffected by Evangelical ardour and Tractarian devotion as the "unrespectable" sections of the working class.

Who constituted the middle classes in mid-Victorian England and what values they espoused have been questions seriously debated by historians. The middle classes of Victorian England, the object so much of Ruskin's

attacks encompassed a great variety of people. Middle class status came from having a regular income from a non manual job in business or the professions. The widest definition of the middle classes in this period would stress the keeping of domestic servants.³⁴ On the other hand, the narrowest definition of the middle classes would place the middle class at two hundred thousand persons corresponding to the number of income tax assessments of over 300 a year in England and Wales.³⁵ The middle classes of the period may be divided into upper middle, middle and lower middle classes with a range from wealthy merchants, often self made (of whom Ruskin's father is an archetypal example), to clerks, and teachers earning £60 - £80 a year, which was less than the wages of a skilled artisan.³⁶

The middle classes included professional groups, almost all those in the liberal arts, manufacturers and small tradesmen. Further more every religious denomination in England contained middle class members.³⁷ The clergy themselves were spread across class levels, particularly middle class levels, if their incomes are used as a basis for class placement.³⁸ "Given this much diversity with the middle class itself", claim Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom "it is not surprising that many of its individual members would themselves turn a questioning eye upon its ethos and seek to repudiate or meliorate those unamiable traits that were ascribed to it ... Those who read what John Ruskin wrote and, in one way or another, responded to what he said and held him in honour for having said it, were like him, members of the middle class who had attained to a degree of freedom from this class ethos."³⁹ Much of this middle class Victorian ethos is deplored today for its hypocrisy and humbug yet the overwhelming sense of earnestness which pervades this period⁴⁰ is often overlooked. It was not till a later generation that Oscar Wilde could ridicule earnestness and Gilbert and Sullivan

use The Slave of Duty as the subtitle for The Pirates of Penzance.

Characteristic of the earnestness of the mid-Victorian age was the market for widely circulating serious periodicals. It was in The Cornhill, the first shilling periodical, that Ruskin's Unto This Last appeared, as did Matthew Arnold's Culture and Anarchy. Ruskin's version of political economy, Minera Pulveris appeared in Frazer's Magazine and the writings of Huxley and William Morris also first saw publication in Victorian periodicals. These periodicals were read by a considerable range of the Victorian middle classes.

These serious periodicals also reached some of the self-educated members of the working class. By the late nineteenth century this group was significant and were described as "the aristocracy of labour". It was this section of society that the cheap editions of Ruskin were primarily meant to serve.⁴¹ This "aristocracy of labour" presents another set of problems in trying to understand the class context of Victorian society. E.J. Hobsbawm, in his influential 1954 article "The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth Century Britain" set the terms for modern debate on divisions within working class Victorian England:

There is no single, simple criterion of membership of a labour aristocracy. At least six different factors should, theoretically, be considered. First, the level and regularity of a worker's earnings; second, his prospects of social security; third, his conditions of work, including the way he was treated by foremen and masters; fourth, his relations with the social strata above and below him; fifth, his general conditions of living; lastly his prospects of future advancement and those of his children.

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As Hobsbawm himself readily admitted "comprehensive data however inadequate"⁴³ is only available for the first of his criteria. This

has led Ronald Gray in The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth century Britain c. 1850 - 1914 to state that "the concept of a labour aristocracy is ultimately inadequate as a model of divisions within the Victorian working class."⁴⁴ There is no denying, however, that in mid-Victorian society there had clearly emerged the phenomenon of the self-educated working class man who, in the words of one of their members (George Potter, prominent early trade unionist) was "a man of some culture well read in political and social history ... His self respect is also well enhanced."⁴⁵ Such self respect was given a theoretical underpinning with the writings of Carlyle and Ruskin which heavily stressed "the dignity of labour".

During the 1860s the onrush of events as reflected in the serious periodicals of the day were of great moment to all classes of society. Much of the non fiction appearing in the periodicals during the period was tempered by events leading to the 1867 Reform Act which gave the vote to most artisans working in towns. The question now uppermost in the minds of the periodical reading public was a quality of life issue: what would happen to the arts, culture, the world of beauty - to use Carlyle's phrase - after "shooting Niagara"?⁴⁶ There was considerable talk of the possibility of moral decline in an increasingly egalitarian society; doubly dreaded, because for the mid-Victorian establishment moral decline meant decline in material progress as well.⁴⁷

Material progress for Victorian capitalists was indissolubly linked to what were considered the iron-clad doctrines of laissez-faire. It has been claimed that England in the nineteenth century was closer to an age of laissez-faire than any other society in the last five hundred years of history.⁴⁸

As an economic doctrine laissez-faire upheld the view that a free market economy based upon unrestricted competition and individual self-interest was in harmony with "natural laws". Not only would the individual benefit but it was also in the best interests of society as a whole. This meant there was to be as little interference as possible from the State in the natural working out of the economy. Although, for example, the state could not avoid such issues as printing money, some armament production and some building activities, the commitments of the state to public expenditure were kept at minimal levels.⁴⁹

In an age where the prevailing view stressed the state as a necessary evil to be run as cheaply as possible and where free trade was the order of the day it was inevitable that laissez-faire would extend from being an economic doctrine to a pervasive social doctrine; those who believed in free trade in business and industry believed in free trade in religion and education as well.⁵⁰

Three books in their different ways which were published in 1859 stressed the self assertion of the individual: Samuel Smiles' Self-Help, John Stuart Mill's On Liberty and Darwin's The Origin of Species. Smiles became a best selling author because Self-Help so clearly reflected the middle class emphasis on self-improvement⁵¹ just as surely as Mill's eloquent defence of the sovereignty of the individual found a response in many readers. At the same time it was easy to wrest a social and economic doctrine of the freely competitive man from The Origin of Species by many of Darwin's readers who responded to the lure of the survival of the fittest,⁵² although it was left to social darwinists in the United States to develop this doctrine most fully.

Within ten years of the publication of The Origin of Species fundamental changes, however, were beginning to occur in English society; in the late Victorian period England was moving from an assertive individualism to forms of collectivism.⁵³ Some historians, particularly David Roberts, have placed the origins of the British Welfare State from the beginning of the Victorian age and this has led to lively controversy among social and economic historians.

Although Roberts is careful to stress that "early Victorian collectivism was social and not economic in its emphasis",⁵⁴ he argues that a substantial array of new initiatives had been taken by the government in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. But even if the origins of the Welfare State in England are traced to the early nineteenth century it must be borne in mind that the Edwardians achieved more in a decade than the Victorians in two thirds of a century.⁵⁵

The Education Act of 1870 is taken by some historians who wish to play down the Victorian age as the age of laissez-faire as an example of the culmination of a long period of state intervention in the affairs of England.

Although state intervention in education did increase in England throughout the nineteenth century to a prominent role after the 1870 Education Act this intervention by the State was always reluctantly given, reinforcing the view that this period characterized by Asa Briggs as the age of improvement was in fact primarily the age of laissez-faire and parsimony in public spending. Nevertheless the Victorian stage was crowded with middle class reformers and philanthropists, however much their motives have come under scrutiny by recent historians.

Furthermore, all the reforming efforts of sections of the middle classes in education must be seen, as R. J. W. Selleck has reminded us, in tandem with reform movements in such fields as sanitation, housing, public health and working conditions generally.⁵⁶ Yet this considerable middle class agitation was constantly held in check by those who held power: the landed aristocracy, still very well represented in both Houses of Parliament, and wealthy industrialists and manufacturers. It was not till the collapse of much of English agriculture in the 1870s and 1880s and the shaking out of many Tory rural seats at election times as a consequence, that industry, with all its increasing worker grievances and the parallel revival of socialism, came to be clearly the dominant factor in the British economy. The downward turn in the economy in the latter part of the Victorian period as well as the forward march of rapidly industrializing Germany, France and the United States was to make the whole issue of education in England an increasingly important one as witnessed by the large number of education bills passed in the late Victorian period compared with the many education bills thrown out in the early and mid Victorian period⁵⁷ or so watered down that their impact was largely lost.

Beginnings were made in 1832 when a motion was passed by 50 to 26 votes in the House of Commons⁵⁸ to give £20,000 a year, (the sum requested in the submission)⁵⁹ to voluntary societies to build school houses for "the poorer children" in England. This was hailed as a landmark because it set a precedent for state intervention in education which hitherto had only been supported by endowments (which as the nineteenth century wore on were increasingly subverted by grammar school controllers from their original purpose of helping poor students), the imposition of school fees and voluntary subscriptions.

Another act in 1833 also had implications for education. The aspects of the Factory Act of 1833 which are often most stressed are those limiting the hours of employment of children. Equally important, however, were the requirements of inspectors to see that children attended school daily for two hours on six days a week and to insist that factory owners provide schools where none were available.

Although the Factory Act of 1833 was very difficult to enforce, a further Factory Act of 1844 forced the issue for many employers of children as to whether to provide schools of their own for the children's part-time attendance or send the children to a local school.⁶⁰ Up to the Education Act of 1870 and beyond further series of factory acts widened the net to catch children working in various industries who were not receiving any education because they did not come under the provision of earlier acts. The continuing series of Factory Acts and their educational implications run parallel to a lengthy series of commissions and reviews of education which span the whole period in which Ruskin gave attention to educational problems. The reports of the Royal Commissions on Oxford and Cambridge, the Clarendon (Public Schools), Newcastle (Elementary Schools) and Taunton (Endowed Schools) Commissions and subsequent parliamentary legislation during the 1850s and 1860s brought to a climax the response to education through voluntary agencies during the preceding forty years.

The turbulence of those forty years was intimately bound up with religious rivalry between the Anglicans and Nonconformists which could be seen as free trade in education in which each of the main voluntary bodies, the National Society (Anglican) and the British and Foreign School Society (Nonconformist) were not only competitors in the school building race but also in efforts to wrest money from the State for educational purposes.

So intense did this rivalry become that the development of education, indeed the very continuance of annual grants from the State for education was in jeopardy. Lord John Russell astutely advised the Queen to use her royal prerogative to establish a Committee of the Privy Council on Education to superintend the grants for the building of schools and training colleges.

When the Committee was established its first Secretary was Dr. Kay (afterwards Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth). After having worked as a doctor in Manchester, Kay-Shuttleworth was secretary of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education for ten years (from 1839 - 1849) and was responsible for the reports and minutes of the Committee which he wrote with his small band of inspectors and issued at regular intervals. The Secretary of the Committee had already published The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture of Manchester in 1832. This view of conditions in Manchester was considerably milder than the view Engels was to take in writing on the same subject in 1844.⁶¹

The whole period from the Peterloo riots (1819) to the Chartist demonstrations of the late 1840s is increasingly interpreted in terms of Gramsci's concept of a crisis in hegemony,⁶² wherein the challenges of the working classes had been partly averted by the spread of education for the poor, only a partial solution surely, because on the eve of the Education Act of 1870 only half the children in London and a third to a fifth elsewhere were receiving any schooling. The State was forced to intervene: how else could middle class ideology assert itself in the face of the erosion of older systems of social control and the huge numbers of children, with the great increases in population, that now received no education either at day school or Sunday school?

When Ruskin began writing to the working men of England in 1871 giving his detailed plans for what he considered proper education for the various classes in Victorian society, the effects were just beginning to be felt of the major legislation to re-organize England's educational system, as part of the aftermath of the 1867 Reform Act.

The 1870 Education Act when it was finally passed with various amendments was not the momentous piece of social legislation that it has sometimes been depicted, even the architect of the Act, W. E. Foster, saw it as "filling in the gaps" in the voluntary system by providing for locally elected school boards who could strike a rate to build schools where voluntary organizations had not been able to build them. Nevertheless the 1870 Act did mark the beginning of a universal system of education in England from which there was no going back: not for most men, but for Ruskin, who had participated in many of the controversies of the previous thirty years that had shaken Victorian England, the end of a particular road had been reached and from 1870 onwards Ruskin saw in the achievements of past ages the solutions to England's manifold problems, as reflected in his own private vision of an ideal social order that he communicated to his faithful followers.

On the surface the very essence of all things Victorian, John Ruskin and his visions were essentially alien to the world he lived in and it is only by examining the life of Ruskin, most confessional of writers, that we can begin to assess the nature of Ruskin's contributions to the Victorian milieu of which he was often such an implacable foe.

NOTES

- 1 William Jolly, Ruskin On Education, (London: George Allen: 1894).
- 2 The Works of John Ruskin ed. E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn 39 volumes (London: George Allen 1903 - 1912) referred to hereafter as Works, Volume III, p.L.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Hilda Boettcher Hagstotz, The Educational Theories of John Ruskin (Lincoln, Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press, 1942).
- 5 Reprinted in G.W. Kitchin, Ruskin in Oxford and other studies, (London: John Murray, 1904).
- 6 J. P. Faunthorpe, "Ruskin's Educational Ideals". Saint George, Vol. II (1899), 21 - 41.
- 7 J. Lewis Paton, "Mr. Ruskin on Boyhood", Saint George, Vol. VII (1904), 111 - 114.
- 8 James Almus Russell, "Ruskin the Educator", Education, Vol. XLIX, (December 1928, 245 - 252).
- 9 Francis X Roellinger Jnr., "Ruskin on Education", The Journal of General Education, Vol. IV (October, 1949 - July 1950), 38-47.
- 10 Margaret E. Spence, "The Guild of St. George: Ruskin's Attempts to Translate His Ideas Into Practice", Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 40 (September 1957), 147 - 201.
- 11 Judith Hicks, "The Educational Theories of John Ruskin: A Reappraisal", British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. XXII (1974), 56 - 77.
- 12 Quentin Bell, Ruskin, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978, (1963)), p.9.
- 13 G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, (London: Methuen, 1962), p. 31.
- 14 S. G. Checkland, The Rise of Industrial Society in England 1815 - 1885 (London: Longmans, 1966), p. 27.
- 15 E. J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain Since 1750. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968) p. 89.
- 16 Richard D. Altick, Victorian People and Ideas (London: J.M. Dent, 1974), p. 78.
- 17 S. G. Checkland, The Rise of Industrial Society in England 1815 - 1885, p. 218.
- 18 Maxine Berg, (ed.), Technology and Toil in Nineteenth Century Britain (London: CSE Books, 1979), p. 10.
- 19 Engels to Marx (7th October, 1858) "the embourgeoisement of the English workers" and Marx to Engels (16th April, 1863) "the apparent bourgeois infection of the British workers", cited in E.J. Hobsbawm, Revolutionaries (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), p. 97.

- ²⁰ Maxine Berg, (ed.), Technology and Toil in Nineteenth Century Britain, p. 10.
- ²¹ R. A. Church, The Great Victorian Boom 1850 - 1873 (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 71.
- ²² Ibid., p. 76.
- ²³ W. L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), p. 97.
- ²⁴ E. J. Hobsbawm in reviewing Kitson Clark's The Making of Victorian England claims that "Mr. Kitson Clark's own nineteenth century affiliations would clearly be with the conservatives rather than the liberals". (Victorian Studies, December, 1962, p. 179). Similarly, John F. C. Harrison in reviewing W. L. Burn's The Age of Equipoise (Victorian Studies, March, 1965, p. 266) claims "we are back in the old England of the squires and parsons, with Squire Burn writing a polished, elegant, handsome volume complete with a dedication in Latin".
- ²⁵ G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, p. 44.
- ²⁶ Maxine Berg, (ed.), Technology and Toil in Nineteenth Century Britain, p. 10.
- ²⁷ Ivan Reid, Social Class Differences in Britain (London: Grant McIntyre, 1981, (1977)), p. 10.
- ²⁸ Ibid., quoting Asa Briggs, Essays in Labour History in Memory of G.D.H. Cole (London: Macmillan, 1959), p. 309.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ This listing is from R. S. Neale (ed.), History and Class: Essential Readings in Theory and Interpretation (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 112.
- ³² R. S. Neale "Class and Class Consciousness in Early Nineteenth Century England: Three Classes or Five?", Victorian Studies, XII (1) (September 1968), pp. 5 - 25. Reprinted, but with Section V of the article omitted in Neale's History and Class.
- ³³ R. S. Neale, History and Class, p. 2.
- ³⁴ E. J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, p. 131.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 130.
- ³⁶ John F. C. Harrison, The Birth and Growth of Industrial England 1714 - 1867 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 127.
- ³⁷ Eugene C. Black, (ed.), Victorian Culture and Society (New York: Walker & Co., 1973), p. 153.
- ³⁸ Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church Part II (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1972), p. 167.

- ³⁹ Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom (eds.), Victorian Prose and Poetry (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 6-7.
- ⁴⁰ W. L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964, p. 48.
- ⁴¹ For details of publishing Ruskin see F. A. Munby and Frances H. S. Stallybrass, From Swan Sonnenschien to George Allen & Unwin Ltd. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955), pp. 50 - 86.
- ⁴² E. J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965 (1964), p. 273.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Robert Gray, The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-century Britain c 1850 - 1914 (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 13.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 8 quoting The Reformer, 5 November, 1870.
- ⁴⁶ Richard D. Altick, Victorian People and Ideas, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1974 (1973)), pp. 49 - 50.
- ⁴⁷ W. L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise, p. 106.
- ⁴⁸ Arthur J. Taylor, Laissez-faire and State Intervention in Nineteenth Century Britain (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 64.
- ⁴⁹ E. J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, p. 197.
- ⁵⁰ John F. C. Harrison, The Birth and Growth of Industrial England 1714 - 1867, p. 136.
- ⁵¹ Asa Briggs in Victorian People (London: Odhams, 1954) devotes a chapter to Samuel Smiles and his significance in Victorian culture.
- ⁵² The actual phrase "survival of the fittest" is attributed to Herbert Spencer.
- ⁵³ Arthur J. Taylor, Laissez-faire and State Intervention in Nineteenth Century Britain, p. 49.
- ⁵⁴ David Roberts, Victorian Origins of the Welfare State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), p. 95.
- ⁵⁵ Arthur J. Taylor, Laissez-faire and State Intervention in Nineteenth Century Britain, p. 56.
- ⁵⁶ R.J.W. Selleck, The New Education (Melbourne: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1968), p. 8.
- ⁵⁷ W. F. Connell provides a list of Education Acts 1850-70 and Elementary Education Bills presented 1850-1870 in The Educational Thought and Influence of Matthew Arnold (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), pp. 155 - 156.
- ⁵⁸ Brian Simon, The Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1974), p. 164.

- ⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 165. Simon, followed by many other historians of education, does not mention that £ 20,000 was all that was asked for and hence the impression is given of State parsimony.
- ⁶⁰ Harold Silver, "Ideology and the factory child: attitudes to half-time education" in Phillip McCann (ed.), Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 143.
- ⁶¹ Richard Johnson gives an analysis of Kay-Shuttleworth's 1832 pamphlet in "Educational Policy and Social Control in Early Victorian England", Past and Present, 49 (1970), pp. 101 - 102.
- ⁶² Richard Johnson, "Notes on the schooling of the English working class 1780 - 1850" in Roger Dale et al.(eds.), Schooling and Capitalism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), pp. 50 - 51.

CHAPTER 2

The Ordeal of John Ruskin

John Ruskin's parents were almost as remarkable in their own way as their precocious only child. The parents were both long lived and such were the filial ties that only his father's death gave Ruskin freedom from censorship of his writings as well as the inheritance of a considerable fortune. Still unable to break from his mother, Ruskin lived in the family home till her death. Having lived so long with his parents it was almost inevitable for Ruskin to claim in his autobiography that the cause of his personal failures was parental repression reflected in his abnormal upbringing.¹

In turn Ruskin's own parents had a background with more than its due of turmoil and suffering. John Ruskin's grandfather, John Thomas Ruskin (1761 - 1817) was a grocer in the Old Town section of Edinburgh who later became a commercial traveller. Unsuccessful in business and depressed by the death of his wife, he committed suicide. Although he had slashed his throat, he lingered on for some days at his home, Bowerswell, cared for by his niece, a woman of steel will, Margaret Cock,² who later married the only son of the man she had nursed.

This son, John James Ruskin (1785 - 1864), eventually cleared all his father's debts. After a nine year engagement he married Margaret Cock, his first cousin. The couple married in 1818 when Margaret was thirty-seven years old and John James, thirty-three. The following year (1819) she gave birth to their son, John Ruskin.

Ruskin's parents make fascinating studies. The portrait that Ruskin drew of them in his autobiography, Praeterita, was both partial and deliberately impressionistic, and the parents - thanks to the recent publication of the

Ruskin family letters ³ are now undergoing a process of rehabilitation somewhat akin to the restoration work that Ruskin did for many of the damaged drawings of his beloved Turner. In particular, Ruskin's father, John James Ruskin, emerges as a more complex and cultivated person than suggested by John Ruskin's portrait of the prosperous merchant who at his wife's behest indulged the various enthusiasms of his son.

John James Ruskin was educated at the Royal High School in Edinburgh from 1795 - 1801. This was Scott's old school and had a reputation for harshness in discipline as well as academic excellence remarkable even by the standards of late eighteenth century Scotland. As a grocer's son John James was to feel keenly the wounds of having lowly social position compared with many of the more privileged pupils who attended this school; however, he did well in his studies and developed his life-long interests in literature, drawing and the fine arts.

Wishing to go to university to study law, John James was thwarted by his parents who sent him to London in his seventeenth year to enter commerce. When his father's business collapsed he entered the firm of wine merchants, Gordon Murphy, where he met another ambitious young clerk, Pedro Domecq. Joining with Henry Telford, a man of independent means, they formed a partnership. Ruskin, Telford and Domecq, were soon to become the leading importers of sherry from Jerez. It was an agreeable partnership: "Ruskin supplied the brains, Telford the money and Domecq the sherry." ⁴

The status of a very successful wine merchant was a cut above many other merchants. John James took well to his role as adviser to the aristocracy on the selection of their wines. Being his own traveller he was able to combine business and pleasure. His wife and son went with him on

many of his travels and young John Ruskin saw at an early age most of the famous beauty spots and cathedrals and castles of England, as well as the paintings lining the walls of many an aristocrat's residence.

Not surprisingly, John James Ruskin, identifying strongly with the political stance of his patrons, was a Tory from whom his son derived "the Toryism which my best after thought has only served to confirm."⁵ The Ruskins, father and son, both identified with the Ultra-Tory faction, which in turn was closely connected with the Evangelical wing of the Church of England. The Ultra-Tories (already disappearing by the time of Ruskin's first coming to real grips with political issues in The Stones of Venice and proposing "feudal" solutions) stressed a strictly hierarchical society, limited suffrage, and exclusion from public office of all who were not members of the Church of England. As a consequence the Ultra-Tories naturally deplored the Catholic Emancipation Bill (1829) and the first Reform Bill (1832).⁶

Most significant for an understanding of Ruskin's social and political writings was the censorship imposed by his Tory father. For example, when Ruskin first directly took up social issues in three letters to The Times on free trade, taxation and education⁷ he asked his father's permission to publish them because the father was Ruskin's literary agent and adviser. The father responded to these letters by declaring that "all attacks on your books are only as the waves beating on Eddystone Lighthouse, whereas your politics are Slum Buildings liable to be knocked down; and no man to whom authority is a useful engine should expose himself to frequent defeat by slender forces."⁸ Ruskin was so crushed by his father's censorship that when he wrote next on social questions some five years later he took an indirect route, using public lectures as

his medium; The Political Economy of Art, was delivered at Manchester on July 10 and 13, 1857, and reissued in 1880 as A Joy For Ever.

Inevitably comparisons have been made between the unusual upbringing by two Scots fathers of their distinguished sons: indeed "rarely have the childhoods of talented men been so signally and dedicatedly warped as were those of Mill and Ruskin."⁹ In Ruskin's case, however, Van Akin Burd has shown that from their letters Ruskin's parents in their relationship to their child's upbringing were more likeable than the portraits that Ruskin left in his autobiography.¹⁰ The essential difference in the education of Mill and Ruskin - despite all the commonality of imposed isolation and formidable precociousness - was that whereas "James Mill fed his son political and economic doctrine from an early age John James Ruskin seems to have done everything in his power to keep his son from directing his studies toward political and economic subjects".¹¹

Nevertheless John James Ruskin was no fanatic. He wrote to his son "We must hold to the anchor of Rationality, stick to our Humanities. We have Scripture warrant for this for surely the whole of the greatest part of the best men in Scripture were eminently men of the world, and even our Saviour himself."¹² This appeal to rationality was paralleled by declarations such as "I am exceedingly well off under any sort of Queen and shall make no attempt at revolution or disturbing the Government."¹³

"An entirely honest merchant" was an epitaph that John Ruskin had enscribed on his father's tombstone. Nevertheless this did not stop John James Ruskin from pursuing his business interests with the utmost vigour and lack of sentiment: "When you enter your office or a Bookseller shop

leave your feelings at the Door and take them up on your exit if you choose. If you are influenced by them in either place, you are undone and the world will have no sympathy with you." ¹⁴

Such was the quality of Mr. Ruskin's good wine and so ably was it marketed that John James was able to ensure that when his son went to Oxford he was enrolled as a gentleman-commoner (partly because of fear of his being unable to pass matriculation examinations because of his sporadic education.) The father, realizing that "his son had been through a Door where others are kept out" ¹⁵ was later to thank the accommodating Dean Gaisford of Christ Church after his son's graduation by giving the Dean at least a reward in this world: "3 doz sherry wines of a particularly celebrated vintage 1823 of which very little now exists." ¹⁶

The very successful sherry business did not preclude John James coming home from the counting house every day to dinner at half past four, punctually joining the small family circle which waited so expectantly for him.

Firstly, the parents had dinner while John James told of the day's sherry orders and his wife gave counsel and encouragement. Then young John would join the family circle: "- I having my cup of milk, and slice of bread-and-butter, in a little recess, with a table in front of it, wholly sacred to me: and in which I remained in the evenings as an Idol in a niche, while my father read to her - and to me, so far as I chose to listen." ¹⁷

The range of the father's reading to the family was extensive: young John heard all of Shakespeare's comedies and historical plays, Cervantes, all of

Sir Walter Scott and also much of the poetry of Pope, Spenser and Byron. The parents also had read extracts from eighteenth century novels - somewhat surprisingly, bearing in mind the Evangelical atmosphere that suffused the home.

By the time Ruskin was four years old, the family, with increasing prosperity, had moved from the Bloomsbury district (54 Hunter Street) to a large house on the southern outskirts of London, 28 Herne Hill (with a fine garden). While Ruskin was growing up his father was enjoying a rapidly expanding income, but the rising family fortunes created tensions. Lowly social position remained in the background of John Ruskin's family: his maternal grandmother had kept the King's Head Tavern at Croydon where his mother was born; his grandfather (it will be recalled) was a grocer; his aunt married a baker who lived over his shop.¹⁸ Attempts to suppress these origins were found in spending a considerable portion of the recently acquired financial wealth in buying what were considered the best books, acclaimed paintings and constant travel. The Ruskins' only child had ready access to the best of "culture" and was not tainted by trade. Moreover the young Ruskin's learning experiences were under the constant watchful eyes of his parents.

The extent and pressure of this parental solicitude was of such a marked degree (even for a Victorian upper middle class family), that Ruskin's early upbringing remains one of the best known episodes in the lives of Victorian men of letters:

No toys of any kind were at first allowed ... I had a bunch of keys to play with, as long as I was capable only of pleasure in what glittered and jingled: as I grew older I have a cart and a ball, and when I was five or six years old, two boxes of well-cut wooden bricks. With these modest, but I still think, entirely sufficient possessions, and being always summarily

whipped if I cried, did not do as I was told or tumbled on the stairs, I soon attained serene and secure methods of life and motion, and could pass my days contentedly in tracing the squares and comparing the colours of my carpet: examining the knots in the wood of the floor, or counting the bricks in the opposite houses... ¹⁹

Stories of whippings and the mother's attitudes generally - for example, forbidding the maid to stop the child from touching a boiling tea-urn in order to teach the child the penalty of wilfulness - led Edith Sitwell (herself hardly qualified to be so censorious) to describe the mother as an "old beast".²⁰

In response to Edith Sitwell it can be argued that the child not eating with the parents and the constant whippings were not unusual and may have been the norm in many a Victorian family. Moreover the parents did love one another dearly and their love for their son, even if it spoke as much about their own anxieties as concern for their son, was nevertheless a real love. This does not deny that a childhood with few toys combined with a great deal of solitude and harsh discipline springing from the mother's Evangelical religious convictions took their toll on the young Ruskin. Another mixed blessing was the Bible reading regimen:

As soon as I was able to read with fluency, she began a course of Bible work with me, which never ceased till I went to Oxford. She read alternate verses with me, watching at first, every intonation of my voice, and correcting the false ones, till she made me understand the verse, if within my reach, rightly, and energetically. It might be beyond me altogether; that she did not care about; but she made sure that as soon as I got hold of it at all, I should get hold of it by the right end.

In this way she began with the first verse of Genesis, and went straight through, to the last verse of the Apocalypse, hard names, numbers, Levitical law and all; and began at Genesis the next day. ²¹

Such was the impact of this early training that when a scholar checked five thousand of his Biblical references, Ruskin was found to have made only one

mistake: David needed five smooth stones not three to kill Goliath.²²

By constantly having apposite quotations and references from the Bible at his disposal Ruskin could always deliver his message in a mesmerising way. Even the smallest or most transient of issues seemed to be of import to Ruskin's followers when it was clothed in Biblical allusion.

Although Ruskin considered the training in Biblical knowledge the most valuable part of his home education, there was much of his early upbringing which he deplored and this strikes a discordant note in the otherwise pellucid charm of Praeterita. The grievances are mainly concerned with not having been equipped to lead an ordinary life:

My judgment of right and wrong, and powers of independent action were left entirely undeveloped; because the bridle and blinkers were never taken off me. Children should have their times of being off duty, like soldiers... the ceaseless authority exercised over my youth left me, when cast out at last into the world, unable for some time to do more than drift with its vortices.²³

The age of his mother at the time of his birth and her subsequent long illness²⁴ coupled with the frequent business absences of the father meant that Ruskin had a childhood that was often lonely and isolated but he was to find compensation in his close detailed observation of nature. It was the vividness and accuracy of his descriptions of natural phenomena that the readers of the first volume of Modern Painters found so remarkable and pleasing, even if they were not won over to the cause of Turner.²⁵

Ruskin had ample opportunity to observe the world of nature. His mother was responsible for his early education but only taught in the mornings till the work for the day had been completed to her satisfaction. In the afternoons he was left to his own devices within the brick walls of his fifty-by-one hundred yard garden which, unlike that of Eden, was one

"where all the fruit was forbidden; and there were no companionable beasts: in other respects the little domain answered every purpose of Paradise to me." ²⁶ Nevertheless from the many hours spent in this garden came "the great part of my acute perception and deep feeling of the beauty of architecture and scenery abroad." ²⁷

The even tenor of Ruskin's early childhood with its enforced solitude eventually had to be broken by the necessity of his having to get an education beyond the family circle, particularly if he was going to fulfil his parents' wishes by becoming a bishop, but even when Ruskin eventually went up to Oxford his mother went with him, an event scarcely less remarkable in the mid-nineteenth century than it is today.

After a succession of individual tutors Ruskin was sent as a day boy to the nearby school at Camberwell of the Reverend Thomas Dale and later at Dale's residence in London. ²⁸ From 1828 to 1830 Dale had been a professor of English literature and language at King's College and again held this position from 1836 to 1839. It was through this connection that Ruskin was a student at King's College during 1836 till entering Christ Church Oxford in January, 1837.

Ruskin's enrolment as a gentleman-commoner at Christ Church was unusual, making him one of the first merchants' sons to have the same privileges and distinctions at University as the sons of the nobility: namely, wearing a silken gown with a golden tassel on a velvet cap; enjoying better furnished rooms; sitting at a special gentleman commoner's table for meals. ²⁹

The sherry trade had provided the money for young Ruskin to consort with young aristocrats and Mrs. Ruskin was delighted, for example, when she saw her son walking arm in arm with Lord Desart. The snobbery of the elder Ruskins would have turned to dismay, however, if they had but known of the undercurrents of aristocratic life at Christ Church. Many years later, in the course of reproaching his parents for their dismay at his friendship with the impoverished painter, Burne-Jones, Ruskin made the following revelations:

You and my mother used to be delighted when I associated with men like Lords March & Ward - men who had their drawers filled with pictures of naked bawds - who walked openly with their harlots in the sweet country lanes - man who swore, who diced, who drank, who knew nothing except the names of racehorses - who had no feelings but those of brutes - whose conversation at the very hall dinner table would have made prostitutes blush for them ...³⁰

An undergraduate at Christ Church at the same time as Ruskin recalled students at this college of aristocratic patronage being chiefly devoted to hunting, shooting, cock-fighting, boating and "heavy suppers" among other pleasures such as badger-baiting, otter-hunting and prize-fighting.³¹ The University reforms of the eighteen fifties were yet a world away. The deadly serious young Ruskin could only deplore his fellow students' idleness as much as they ridiculed him for his bookish ways. Not that Ruskin thought much better of many of his tutors, as the portraits of the Dons preserved in the aspic of Praeterita clearly indicate. For example, the very scholarly Dr. Pusey (1800 - 1883), Regius Professor of Hebrew from 1829 till his death, was in Ruskin's eyes "only a sickly and ill put together English clerical gentleman who never looked one in the face."³² The Dean of Christ Church, Gaisford, fared no better, being described "in his general aspect too much like the sign of the Red Pig which I afterwards saw set up in pudding raisins, with black currants for eyes, by an imaginative grocer in

Chartres fair; and in the total bodily and ghostly presence of him was to me only a rotundly progressive terror, or sternly enthroned and niched Anathema."³³

During the years of Ruskin's college residence the bitter Tractarian controversies waxed strong. Fanned by such leaders as Pusey, these controversies racked not only Oxford but shook the Church of England to its foundations as well.³⁴ Ruskin, however, was only indirectly affected, his ever vigilant mother making sure her son did not stray from the Evangelical fold. Although there are few references to the "Oxford conspirators" during his undergraduate years, Ruskin was later to condemn the "Puseyite" position, particularly in Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds (1851). Nevertheless Tractarianism had two wings one of which did influence Ruskin more than he was prepared to acknowledge. "Puseyism" referred to in contemporary usage not only to the theology of the Oxford Movement after Newman's "defection" to Rome but to the new attention being given to church architecture, liturgy ceremonial and the physical accessories of worship. Although the leading Tractarians such as Pusey did not stress ritualism as such,³⁵ by the time of Ruskin's coming to Oxford the two streams were merging and societies were developing to study early church architecture. Many members of the Archaeological Society at Oxford and the Camden Society at Cambridge (the latter published the influential The Ecclesiologist from 1841 to 1868)³⁶ did eventually join the Church of Rome. Although not an Oxford man, the best known convert who promoted Gothic architecture was Augustus Pugin whose Contrasts (1836) and subsequent writings had a considerable influence on Ruskin, despite his claim that he had only glanced at Contrasts while at Oxford.³⁷

Another line of disturbance at Oxford, however, did affect Ruskin considerably because it concerned one of his life-long interests, geology.

At Christ Church Ruskin soon came in contact with the Reverend William Buckland, a leading geologist. Although Buckland is now often mainly remembered for his eccentricities - "exotic animals were often to be found in his rooms, either roaming freely about or severed up at the dinner-table"³⁸ - in his day he was the celebrated author of an essay in the Bridgewater Treatises which tried to reconcile the accounts of scripture with those of Sir Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology (1830-1833). The Bridgewater Treatises were so called because the Earl of Bridgewater had left eight thousand pounds to be devoted to "showing God's power and goodness as manifested in the creation".³⁹ In Buckland was found an able advocate: he had already contributed to the attempt to harmonize geology and Genesis by arguing that heaven and earth being created "on the first day", simply meant "in the beginning" which in turn expressed an "undefined period of time".⁴⁰ But for all Buckland's ability at apologetics he was fighting a rearguard action; gradually he dropped claims that the Biblical Flood had actually happened and made it clear that Genesis could not be taken literally.

Obviously those forces unleashed by Principles of Geology had succeeded in pushing back by millennia Archbishop Ussher's calculation of the date of creation in 4004 B.C. Behind all the particular quarrels brought to the surface by geological findings was the underlying assumption - particularly disturbing to Evangelicals - that the "Universe was not governed by acts of Providence, but by permanent laws of nature and that past physical events were still governed by the same laws."⁴¹

Although Ruskin maintained "a firmly orthodox attitude in print during the 1840s and 50s"⁴² the twin disturbances of "Puseyism" and Geology did leave their imprint. Ten years after leaving Oxford he wrote to

the one friend he made at Oxford and kept for life, Henry Acland, a "Puseyite" ⁴³ and confessed as follows:

... You speak of the Flimsiness of your own faith. Mine, which was never strong, is being beaten into mere gold leaf, and flutters in weak rags from the letter of its old forms; but the only letters it can hold by at all are the old Evangelical formulae. If only the Geologists would let me alone, I could do very well, but those dreadful Hammers! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses - and on the other side, these unhappy, blinking Puseyisms; men trying to do right and losing their very Humanity. ⁴⁴

Despite the controversies that clouded Oxford, Ruskin for the most part went quietly on with his studies. He dutifully read the required classics, diligently translated his Greek and Latin, and immersed himself in mathematics. As well as his keen interest in geology he assiduously set to work to win the Newdigate prize for poetry which his parents had as part of their plans for his success in later life - which moreover included his not only being Primate of England by the age of fifty, but also, as Ruskin wryly recalled in his autobiography, gaining a double first degree, marrying Lady Clara Vere de Vere and writing "poetry as good as Byron's only pious." ⁴⁵

The parents were delighted when on the third attempt Ruskin won the Newdigate prize for 1839 with "Salsette and Elephanta": the poem was certainly pious; not only were the metres nicely tuned to Oxford clerical ears but also the message, which stressed the imminent conversion of India to Christianity, was appreciated. Reciting the long poem in the Sheldonian Theatre to a crowd of two thousand gave Ruskin his first taste of performing to large audiences. Needless to say the poem was not as good as one of Byron's, but Wordsworth, who was in the audience (having received an honorary degree on the same occasion) was very kind.

Other fond wishes of Ruskin's parents turned out badly. The first love of his life was certainly no Lady Clara Vere de Vere, not even Protestant, but Adèle Domecq, one of the four daughters of one of the partners in the sherry business. John Ruskin first met Adèle Domecq in 1836 at his father's house when she was fifteen and he was seventeen; he was infatuated and his passion was rekindled when the Domecqs visited the Ruskin home at Christmas, 1838.

But within a month Adèle announced her engagement to Baron Duquesne and John's hopes were crushed.

Following upon this disappointment a frantic involvement in study took its toll. Mrs. Ruskin's worst fears were confirmed - and her residence in Oxford justified - when John came to her lodgings, in alarm, having coughed up blood. With the consent of his college Ruskin postponed taking his degree and was removed quickly back to the family home. In a sense it was a false warning as nothing serious developed but certainly the routine of ten hours' study a day needed to be broken. There were consolations, however, for all this overwork and stress, particularly the paintings and drawings of Turner which now had become Ruskin's consuming passion.

Urged on by his son's admiration for Turner, John James Ruskin became an avid collector of this artist's work, in the five years after 1839 acquired seventeen pictures spending over twelve hundred pounds on the project.⁴⁶ This was not without some grumbling within the family ranks: on one occasion John claimed "I am starving to look on Turner", to which his father replied, John Bull-fashion, "I like him after Roast and pudding and a few glasses of sherry, which too many Turners would soon abridge us of".⁴⁷ But to console the father there were meetings with the artist himself and Turner became a guest at John's annual birthday dinners. These meetings with Turner provoked lively

comments from the budding young art critic: "Turner there is no mistaking for a moment - his keen eye and dry sentences can be the signs only of a high intellect." ⁴⁸ Young John Ruskin was not only much influenced by Turner's paintings but also by his view of the world (the influence of the two most important cultural figures in Ruskin's life, Turner and Carlyle, is discussed in detail in Chapter 3). Initially Ruskin was also strongly attracted to Turner's blunt philistine ways: "I found him a somewhat eccentric, keen-mannered, matter of fact, English-minded gentleman; good natured evidently, bad-tempered evidently, hating humbug of all sorts, shrewd, perhaps a little selfish, highly intellectual." ⁴⁹

Ruskin found his chance to defend Turner when the influential Literary Gazette criticized the artist. As early as 1836, when he was seventeen, he had written a long article in defense of Turner who had been bitterly attacked in Blackwood's Magazine, but for a variety of reasons, including Turner's dissuasion, the rejoinder was not published. This time a whole book was needed which had a grandiloquent title: Modern Painters: their superiority in the art of Landscape Painting; to all the Ancients proved by examples of the True, the Beautiful and the Intellectual, from the works of Modern Artists, especially from those of J.M.W. Turner Esq. R.A. The author was simply given as "A Graduate of Oxford" - by the time of publication, after travelling abroad with his parents, Ruskin had returned to Oxford to take out a pass degree, with the examiners being so impressed with his work that they took the unusual step of giving him double fourth class honours. The identity of the Oxford graduate soon became known and Ruskin's literary career was launched. Little did the youthful author realize it would take another seventeen years to bring Modern Painters to a close and even then the work was not really finished.

The Ruskins went abroad again in 1844, in the main so that John could develop his discussion of "Truth" (not treated to his satisfaction in the first volume of Modern Painters) by reference to the mountains, trees and skies of Switzerland. After John's geological and botanical studies at Chamounix, the tour continued and ended with an examination of the paintings in the Louvre. In the next year, Ruskin went abroad again, for the first time without his parents, to study art further in the course of preparing the second volume of Modern Painters for publication in 1846.

By this time the cause of poetry had long been put behind him and Ruskin now saw himself not only as a critic of art but of architecture as well and the ideas that he had first put forward in essays on architecture for Loudon's Magazine while still an undergraduate at Oxford⁵⁰ were now being developed further in visits abroad in the early eighteen forties; indeed The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849) had been planned as early as 1846.

Between the planning and publication of The Seven Lamps of Architecture Ruskin married Euphemia Gray. He had first met "Effie" (as she was universally called) when she was twelve years old and had stayed briefly at the Ruskins' home. As a result of this visit Ruskin wrote The King of the Golden River, a delightful fairy story to please the young Miss Gray. Not only was this work very popular when it was first published but has remained in print virtually ever since.

Effie grew up to be a vivacious attractive woman who married Ruskin when she was nineteen years old, her husband being not quite ten years older. This tragic marriage has become a subject where "partisans of

either Ruskin or Effie have descended on the affair, which has in the main, become a battleground for inadequately and unsatisfactorily related biographical exegesis."⁵¹ It was perhaps inevitable - quite apart from prurient interests still not satisfied in literary journals today - that a man who wrote at length on women and their education should still have his own failed marriage come under scrutiny.

On Ruskin's wedding day, April 10, 1848, there took place the great Chartist procession in London. John James Ruskin later gave as his excuse for not attending his son's wedding the threat of a Chartist uprising.⁵² The Ruskins were married at Bowerswell the home of so many unhappy memories for the Ruskin family - Effie was born in the very room where John Ruskin's grandfather had committed suicide.⁵³ For Bowerswell had passed into the hands of the Gray family: Effie's father, George Gray had been the solicitor of the trust set up for the children of John James Ruskin's sister and knowing the family wanted to dispose of Bowerswell bought it from them, laying the basis of a distant but friendly relationship with the Ruskin family.⁵⁴ Bowerswell was again to prove an unfortunate setting: seven years later Euphemia Ruskin would marry the artist John Millais in the same drawing room that had been the scene of her first marriage (on that day Millais had been taking part in the Chartist procession).⁵⁵

Ruskin was only ever really married to his work, as he himself admitted. His young wife had to fit in with all his plans. He was a natural recluse who married a woman who loved gaiety and the social life. Mary Luytens drily remarked⁵⁶ that Effie should have married a diplomat not an art-critic; even her second marriage to an artist presented problems. Although this latter marriage was mostly successful and Effie enjoyed a large family, with a house to match in Kensington, as well as a deerstalk in her beloved Highlands, Millais was hard pressed to pay the bills ever by

painting Cherry Ripe and Bubbles.⁵⁷ (Perhaps as Ruskin sympathisers have pointed out, if he had remained married to Effie he would have been forced to write prose Bubbles instead of Unto This Last.)

John James Ruskin was extremely generous to his son when John married, not only settling ten thousand pounds on the couple at their marriage, of which John received the income, but also an allowance of a hundred pounds a year was given to Effie as well as all their travelling expenses abroad being met.⁵⁸ By February, 1854 the claim was made in a letter to Effie's father "that in the few years since their marriage they have had from me 15,500 pounds and spent all except a short Lease of House and value of furniture".⁵⁹

After two years of marriage and enduring the oppressive atmosphere that the indebtedness to the elder Ruskins created, Effie suggested a trip to Venice which was "a very wise and somehow touching move on her part, and the very best chance of a full reconciliation between her and John away from parental influence and interference."⁶⁰ Ironically it was Effie, whom John later spoke of so bitterly, who was responsible for turning her husband's intention of writing a sketch of Venetian art into his producing the three volumed major work, The Stones of Venice, perhaps the book most closely associated with Ruskin's name.

Venice, like Oxford, became a leit-motif in the career of Ruskin, who made eleven visits to his beloved Italian city between 1836 and 1888.⁶¹ Often he stayed in Venice only a week or two, but on three occasions (two of which were spent with his wife) he remained several months.⁶² On his first visit to Venice with his wife he managed to get a great deal of work done. He later recalled that The Stones of Venice cost him

"three close years of incessant labour examining the chronology of Venice; two long winters being wholly spent in drawing details on the spot".⁶³ Effie, in the course of her weekly letters home, gave a graphic picture of Ruskin at work:

John excites the liveliest astonishment to all and sundry in Venice, and I do not think they have made up their minds yet whether he is very mad or very wise. Nothing interrupts him and whether the Square is crowded or empty he is either seen with a black cloth over his head taking Daguerrotypes or climbing about the capitals covered with dust, or else with cobwebs exactly as if he had just arrived from taking a voyage with the old woman on her broomstick ...⁶⁴

The amount of Ruskin's work in Venice was indeed prodigious: he drew and measured almost every feature of architectural interest and importance that he liked, making thousands of sketches, filling page after page with detailed notes and measurements.⁶⁵ But still the work could not be completed without returning to Venice.

But plans for the speedy completion of The Stones of Venice were interrupted by Ruskin placing his own respectability and established position in jeopardy by coming to the rescue of a little known group of young artists who had affronted the Royal Academy with their paintings which carried the mysterious initials "P.R.B."

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were a group as odd as their name: although one of the youthful leaders, Millais, dressed conventionally and played down the artist role, the same could not be said of the other leader, Dante Gabriel Rossetti or his consumptive mistress, Elizabeth Siddal. Ruskin thought highly of her work and was very distraught when she died from an overdose of laudanum. He certainly took a risk being associated with persons like Rossetti, but had been genuinely

impressed with much of the work of the Brotherhood. His actual intervention on their behalf had been prompted by his friend Coventry Patmore, author not only of that paean to Victorian womanhood "The Angel in the House" but also of "The Woodsman's Daughter". This later poem was the subject of a painting by Millais which had been furiously attacked in The Times on the 7th May, 1851 along with Millais' The Return of the Dove to the Ark and Mariana as well as Holman Hunt's Valentine and Sylvia. The Times critic complained these new artists could not even draw figures in proportion.

In 1848 the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had been formed when Millais was nineteen (he had entered the Royal Academy as a child prodigy at the age of eleven) Rossetti twenty and Holman Hunt twenty-one years old. Four more members were elected to this group,⁶⁶ which also had a wider circle of followers, but Millais, Hunt and Rossetti remained the central figures.

The Pre-Raphaelites had attempted to recapture the realistic attention to detail, the brilliant colour and the spiritual conviction of medieval and early Renaissance art. Furthermore Holman Hunt invoked Ruskin's famous sentence from Modern Painters as an inspiration: "Go to nature in all singleness of heart, selecting nothing, rejecting nothing".⁶⁷ Thus Pre-Raphaelite art had twin tensions which characterized the movement: "romantic medievalism and a positivist almost forensic concentration on detail".⁶⁸

This newly emerging school of art created tensions for Ruskin as well. He gladly supported the young artists who were being as fiercely attacked as Turner had once been, but it was a tightrope act trying to reconcile contradictory enthusiasms for Turnerian "impressionism" and Pre-Raphaelite realism.⁶⁹ Ruskin could not reconcile the differences, and as John Walton has shown⁷⁰ in his analysis of Ruskin's own drawings, he alternated between

minute detailed studies in the Pre-Raphaelite manner or large scale shadowy Turner-esque impressions.

Ruskin's initial reaction to the Pre-Raphaelite paintings, as shown in his first letter to The Times on the subject, (13th May, 1851) was a mixed one. He hastened to assure his readers that "no one who has met with any of my writings will suspect me of desiring to encourage them in their Romanist and Tractarian tendencies"⁷¹ and he was pleased to note that "Mr. Millais' lady in blue", the subject of Mariana, "is heartily tired of her painted window and idolatrous table".⁷² What Ruskin did praise was "the perfect truth, power and finish" of parts of the pictures of the Pre-Raphaelite group. In a second letter to The Times (30th May, 1851) Ruskin said that he had now been assured that the artists had "no Romanizing tendencies"⁷³ and were now applauded for being true to their own personal visions.⁷⁴ The criticism continued, however, to both condemn and praise. For example, in writing of Millais' The Return of the Dove to the Ark "the left hand figure is unredeemed by any expression save that of dull self-complacency", and the viewer is enjoined to study instead "the tender and beautiful expression of the stooping figure".⁷⁵ Although the defense of the Pre-Raphaelites by Ruskin was not without considerable reservations it served the purpose of establishing the reputation of the young artists who were certainly most gratified by his patronage.

After the letters which appeared in The Times defending the Pre-Raphaelites and the subsequent publishing of the book Pre-Raphaelitism (which was really more about Turner) Ruskin returned to The Stones of Venice project. In 1852 John and Effie were back in Venice. Although their first visit to this city had been reasonably happy⁷⁶ despite the underlying dissatisfactions of their lives, the second visit to this city created greater tensions. Although Effie reporting back home what seemed to be an amicable agreement - "John is busy at his drawings and books, writing beautiful descriptions and very poetical - he goes out after Breakfast and I never see him till Dinner time"⁷⁷ -

Ruskin nevertheless resented his wife's increasing involvement in the social whirl of Venice, particularly so, as by the time of their second visit the city was socially flourishing again after the dust of the Austrian invasion had settled. ⁷⁸ Effie became a centre of attention ("many are the cigars taken out of mouths as we pass" ⁷⁹) and was prominent at all the main balls and parties which John avoided wherever he could. Venice served different purposes for husband and wife. For Ruskin the city was "a compact museum where his architectural, painterly, mineralogical, botanical, political, social and economic work found its various materials." ⁸⁰ On the other hand, for his lively wife Venice meant café amusements, endless waltzes and polkas, being waited on by Austrian officers, and even members of the aristocracy. When the research for The Stones of Venice was at last completed, the return to England was a great anti-climax for both of them.

There were some compensations, however, because the Ruskins were able to pick up the threads of the many new acquaintances and friendships that they had made - mainly at Effie's instigation - after their first return from Venice. Among the renewed friendships were those with the Carlyles, Coventry Patmore and the ninety year old poet Samuel Rogers (whose volume of poetry, Italy, had been illustrated by Turner and which had served as Ruskin's first interest to that artist). Rogers was a banker as well as a poet and at his celebrated breakfasts the beau monde of London, particularly its literary figures used to meet. Effie, whom Rogers found enchanting, was as welcome as her lionized husband (much as he preferred his own solitude), by now for her own sake. Another friendship that was renewed was that with Millais. John had followed up his defence of the young artist by a personal visit to Millais' studio and both he and Effie were delighted with the charm and attractiveness of the twenty-two year old artist.

It was not long before young Mrs. Ruskin began to act as a model for Millais, sitting for a picture, called (ironically, in view of Effie's later flight from Ruskin) The Order of Release. The painting, which was a great success, depicted a long suffering wife supporting her wounded Jacobite husband as he is freed from gaol by the order that she had managed to obtain.

At the same time that The Order of Release was being exhibited Ruskin was very busy completing The Stones of Venice. A summer's holiday in Scotland was planned to help him recover from the intensity of his labours, and Millais, accompanied by his brother William, was asked to come with John and Effie on their tour. What was meant as a great adventure, a prospect of several delightful weeks together, brought instead "irrevocable changes in three lives"⁸¹ and great suffering. Although this story has been retold with great skill by Mary Luytens in her editing of the correspondence of this period, it will never be known absolutely whether Ruskin deliberately threw Effie and John Millais together in order to get rid of her, or did so unconsciously, - or whether Ruskin, deep in finishing The Stones of Venice was unaware of the attraction that Effie and Millais had for one another while The Order of Release was being painted, the attraction being heightened while they were in Scotland when Effie revealed the true nature of her marriage to Millais.

Nine months after their return from the Highlands Effie was granted a divorce on the grounds that "the pretended marriage" was a "nullity" since "the said John Ruskin was incapable of consummating the same by reason of incurable impotency".⁸² Although Ruskin did not defend the case he later denied impotence - too late, however, for any chance of his ever marrying again. Within a year Effie became Mrs. Millais. There were eight children of this marriage.

John Millais died on August 13, 1896 aged sixty-seven, a knight of the realm, and was buried in the crypt of St. Paul's, next to Turner.⁸³ Within sixteen months Effie, aged seventy, died at Bowerswell.⁸⁴

At the very time Ruskin had first been threatened with divorce⁸⁵ he was commencing his distinguished career as a teacher, having as part of his first lecture series, the works of Turner and Millais.

Ruskin's lectures were given against his parents' wishes. They still had an iron control over their nearly thirty-five years old son.

The father complained that "I don't care to see you allied with the platform - although the pulpit would be our delight"⁸⁶ whereas the mother was concerned that he should not "bring himself personally before the world till somewhat older."⁸⁷ John tried to assuage his parents by saying that he did not "mean at any time to take up the trade of a lecturer,"⁸⁸ nevertheless, his first lectures to audiences of a thousand people were well received (according to The Edinburgh Guardian⁸⁹) and Ruskin was launched into the activity of lecturing which despite his disclaimer became "one of his most characteristic activities."⁹⁰

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, on whom Ruskin was lecturing, soon ran into troubles of its own. Until the summer of 1854 a warm friendship existed between Rossetti, Millais and Hunt but then Rossetti and Millais on the one hand and Rossetti and Hunt on the other became estranged.⁹¹ Rossetti fell into disgrace with Millais for still seeing Ruskin and with Hunt for philandering with Anne Miller whom Hunt had hoped to marry.⁹² Ruskin is often accused of withdrawing support for the Brotherhood and causing its collapse; in fact despite the failure of his marriage - which had become, together with the fortunes of the Crimean War, the main topics of London conversation⁹³ - Ruskin

continued to praise Millais' paintings wherever praise was justified.⁹⁴ The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as a movement soon became fragmented because Millais sought popularity through increasingly sentimental subject matter whereas Rossetti withdrew into forms of allegorical portraiture and Hunt became isolated from his fellow artists after his visits to Palestine.⁹⁵ The days of the beautiful and tender pictures such as Ophelia and Autumn Leaves were soon spent. During the same period (1854 - 1858) Ruskin's friendship with Rossetti quickened, as it did with Carlyle.⁹⁶ It was not surprising that Ruskin was able to involve Rossetti in his educational venture at the London Men's Working College.

This college, along with the mechanics' institutes, has been claimed as one of the first serious attempts in the educational field for English workmen.⁹⁷ It represented converging streams of Chartism and Christian Socialism. The College was founded by Frederick Denison Maurice, F. J. Furnivall and other leading Christian Socialists. Ruskin's initial involvement with the Working Men's College came through Furnivall who had been introduced to Ruskin in the course of his wife's social excursions. After the uproar surrounding his divorce, being welcomed in the same period to teach at the College was particularly pleasing to Ruskin, who had come to identify with much of the political economy of the Christian Socialists. There was a two-way influence: extracts from Modern Painters has appeared in The Christian Socialist, and at the first meeting of the College on 31st October, 1854, free copies of "The Nature of Gothic" extracted from The Stones of Venice were given away to class members. On the other hand, after two years of teaching at the College Ruskin gave a speech to the workmen building the new Museum of Natural History at Oxford and surprised his audience by discussing socialism and its relationship to Christianity and business "in terms very akin to those used by his Christian Socialist colleagues at the Working Men's College."⁹⁹

From the opening of the College in 1854 till the end of 1858 Ruskin taught each week the beginner's class in Drawing. In after years he gave talks and lectures occasionally - as well as teaching a class in the spring of 1860. Modestly Ruskin taught the elementary group and passed on those class members who showed any kind of proficiency to Rossetti and Lowes Dickinson, by whom they would be instructed in water-colour painting and figure-drawing from life.¹⁰⁰

Ruskin by many surviving contemporary accounts, was a very successful teacher. At the time of his involvement with the Working Men's College his prestige as an art critic was pre-eminent and reflected glory on the College. His views had been sought by various Royal Commissions, his annual Academy Notes (1855 - 1859) were taken very seriously by artists (the ill feeling created caused Ruskin to stop publishing them), and he was dubbed by newspapers as "The Pope of Art".

Despite Ruskin's now formidable reputation he impressed his working-class students by his very friendly informal ways as well as genuine interest in his students and his constant praise and encouragement of their work.¹⁰¹ Besides his regular Thursday classes there were trips to the country to sketch and visits to his home for tea and Turner viewing. Ruskin also brought his Turners, missals, Durer wood-cuts, even a case of brilliant tropical birds to his classes to illustrate points or provide models.¹⁰² As a result of his inspiring teaching a number of his pupils did become engravers, draughtsmen, and one, John Bunney, a professional artist who exhibited at the Royal Academy, - but this had not been Ruskin's intention at all which had simply been to provide a liberal education as his memorandum to intending students had made clear:

The teacher of landscape drawing wishes it to be generally understood by all his pupils that the instruction given in his class is not intended either to fit them for becoming artists, or in any direct manner to advance their skill in the occupations they at present follow. They are taught drawing, primarily in order to direct their attention accurately to the beauty of God's work in the material universe; and, secondarily, that they may be enabled to record, with some degree of truth, the forms and colours of objects when such record is likely to be useful. ¹⁰³

The results of Ruskin's teaching at the Working Men's College were distilled into a book The Elements of Drawing which since the time of its publication in 1857 has continued to be of use and interest. French Impressionists, Monet and Seurat, who had read extracts of Ruskin's manual in translation, were influenced by this work.¹⁰⁴ Even today The Elements of Drawing finds a ready market.¹⁰⁵

Despite his success Ruskin gave up teaching at the Working Men's College because as he wrote in a letter to Maurice "I ascertained beyond all question that the faculty which my own teaching chiefly regarded was necessarily absent in men trained in mechanical toil, that my words and thoughts respecting beautiful things were unintelligible when the eye has been accustomed to the frightfulness of modern city life."¹⁰⁶

At one of the farewells at the College given to Ruskin The Telegraph reported the affection in which the art critic was held:

The Large room of the College was completely filled and the earnest attention with which the eminent lecturer was listened to, and the continual bursts of applause which greeted his simply-chosen words but frequently eloquent remarks testified to the respect and esteem for Mr. Ruskin ... In reply to a question upon the present distress in the manufacturing districts and the best means for ameliorating the same, the lecturer launched into lucid explanations of his own views on political economy. After an hour and a half's genuine instruction (on various subjects) conveyed in a most palatable manner, the meeting broke up, three hearty cheers being given for Mr. Ruskin ... ¹⁰⁷

At the same time as Ruskin was becoming increasingly immersed in political economy his Evangelical approach to Christianity was weakening. The turning point came on a visit abroad in July, 1858. While visiting Turin, Ruskin went to Sunday worship at a little Waldensian chapel. The small congregation was made up of grey haired old women listening to a "Solitary and clerkless preacher, a somewhat stunted figure in a plain black coat with a cracked voice ... (who) put his utmost zeal into a consolatory discourse on the wickedness of the wide world, more especially of the plain of Piedmont and the city of Turin."¹⁰⁸ Going back into "the condemned city"¹⁰⁹ Ruskin went to a gallery and, enchanted by the rich sensuousness of Paul Veronese's Solomon and Sheba, decided from "that day my evangelical beliefs were put away to be debated of no more".¹¹⁰

Returning to England Ruskin resumed the lecturer's "trade" that he had sworn he would not take up and gave a lecture at Manchester on "The Unity of Art" before a large audience which included Miss Bell, Headmistress of Winnington School and five of her senior students.¹¹¹ Miss Bell had been in previous correspondence with Ruskin, and some time after "The Unity of Art" lecture was introduced personally to him by the Bishop of Oxford. When Miss Bell asked Ruskin to visit her small school (of around forty girls) he replied with alacrity beginning what was to be the first of sixteen visits to Winnington between 1859 and 1868. According to Ruskin's plans for Praeterita he was only three chapters from his account of the Winnington years before his health broke down irrevocably in 1889 and he could write no more. He had hoped that his memories of Miss Bell and the children "would reach the reader like strains of lost music"¹¹² and he noted in his diary that while listening to the breakers on Coniston Water at dawn he recalled the "Dances at Winnington" which he hoped he would be able to record in his autobiography.

Fortunately many of Ruskin's letters to the schoolmistress and her pupils at Winnington were discovered in 1952¹¹³ and much of the feeling that Ruskin was unable to recapture in his autobiography has been regained through the discovery and publication of these letters which are important not only for the revelations of Ruskin's inner life but also for accounts of the circumstances surrounding the writing of Sesame and Lilies and The Ethics of the Dust. Furthermore the letters also give an insight into a remarkable school - Winnington certainly deserves a niche in the histories of girls' education in nineteenth century England, even if Derrick Leon's claim that the school was the Dartington Hall of the 1860s"¹¹⁶ is somewhat overstated.

Margaret Bell (who was a year older than Ruskin) was going through a spiritual crisis at the same time as Ruskin's "unconversion". She had read widely in the writings of Christian Socialists and Broad Churchmen such as Maurice and was well acquainted with Alexander John Scott, the first principal of Owens College, Manchester and author of Suggestions on Female Education. Scott, having been charged with heresy by the Church of Scotland had turned to teaching literature at University College, London, where he befriended Maurice and had suggested a union of the University and Queen's Colleges.¹¹⁷ When Scott came to Manchester he sent his children to Winnington as did another controversial figure, John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal, when he came to England to seek redress for being deposed by the Bishop of Cape Town and to arrange for the publication of The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined. This book created a furore when published. At the popular level the Bishop also created a stir with his insistence, for example, that children not be taught about hell-fire. Ruskin - whom Miss Bell had entrusted with giving the girls religious instruction by correspondence and lessons when he came to Winnington - admired Colenso, boasting that his own religious beliefs "were much worse than the Bishop's."¹¹⁸

When Ruskin first called at Winnington after being ushered into the library he found his portrait in the centre of a grouping that included F.D. Maurice, Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, and Archdeacon Julius Hare. This thoughtful touch was not the only aspect of Winnington that pleased Ruskin; he found the manor house and its great park enchanting.

Miss Bell and her young sister, Mary Anne, had leased the school from the second Lord Stanley of Alderley. The manor was seventeen miles from Cheshire, twenty-two from Manchester and situated in the small picturesque village of Winnington. The school was admirably "located to attract the Cheshire gentry, clerics, and the Cottontot grandees of Manchester." ¹¹⁹

Ruskin was intrigued by Margaret Bell's liberal attitudes to education and religion and by the pervasive influence of Maurice and Scott. This was very congenial to Ruskin as he had known Maurice since 1851 and of course subsequently saw him quite frequently while lecturing at the Working Men's College. Furthermore, Ruskin had known Scott since 1855 when the latter had invited him to lecture at Manchester.

In addition to the usual school subjects Miss Bell added unusual opportunities for developments in sports. To Ruskin's surprise, the girls were very good at cricket as well as swinging from ropes attached to tree branches fifteen feet from the ground. There were also unusual approaches to singing, dancing, music and painting.

It was gratifying to know that the girls studied The Elements of Drawing and Ruskin was as enchanted by their singing and dancing as much as by their art work:

They sang me one Mozart mass or hymn after another in full choir last night for an hour and a half together, giving me no more trouble than just to ask for another when one was done -

a very different kind of thing from attending on town ladies at the piano. ¹²⁰

Georgina Burne-Jones recalled the girls dressed in white frocks engaged in country dancing and Ruskin joining in a quadrille, being "scarcely more than a black line, as he moved amongst the white girls in evening dress." ¹²¹ The art critic gave his own account to his parents:

I never saw any dancing at once so finished and so full of life. Old Captain Leslie did a step or two ... I kept resolvedly to the wall for a long time - but at last a beautiful Irish girl of 16 ... pulled me out into the middle of the floor - and I find henceforth I acquitted myself to her satisfaction and that of the fair public ... ¹²²

On his visits to Winnington Ruskin played innumerable games of hide and seek through the many empty rooms of the manor, as well as prisoner's base and other running games. Another pastime was giving the children poems to recite or dramatize. Ruskin wrote to the American poet, James Lowell to tell him how his poetry was used at Winnington:

Last evening I got a nice blue-eyed girl to be Minerva and recited the "when wise Minerva yet was young." You should have heard the silver laughing. (N.B. - I had studied curtesying all the afternoon before - in order to get myself nicely out as Venus.) ¹²³

As well as the dancing, poetry and literature recitals, visiting musicians added to the varied cultural life of the school. Miss Bell snared the leading pianist, Charles Hallé, to come and play for the girls and Ruskin recalled their reaction, writing to his parents that "it was beautiful to see the girls' faces round, the eyes all wet with feeling and the little coral mouths fixed with little half open gaps with utter intensity of astonishment." ¹²⁴

From the very first visit to Winnington Ruskin claimed that "I have learned

and heard a great deal that has been useful to me." ¹²⁵ There is no doubt that Ruskin's emphasis on dancing as the first of a girl's virtues - as stated in The Ethics of the Dust - and the stress on music in education as reflected in the music for singing dances he wrote for the Winnington girls, together with his strong emphasis on physical education and health in his educational writings owe much to his experiences at Miss Bell's school.

Visitors to Winnington, of which there were many, were also an influence on Ruskin and he recalled that Captain Leslie, a neighbour, made a great impression on him as a model leader of men:

He is a very noble and interesting person - the holder of the boat trade on the canal (for salt and clay) employing about 700 boatmen - the roughest operatives of the district. He had been in early life the captain of a convict ship; and having no fear, and entirely upright and kind mind, has got these men to obey him like children ... He never overlooks faults - and sends his men to jail without the slightest compunction - always taking them back into his employment when they come out of it, and treating them as kindly as before ... When work is slack he never discharges his men and he maintains them at same wages all through the long frosts when his boats are stopped on the canals. They struck once in the summer for higher wages. He did not raise them a farthing - and withdrew his usual support in the winter. The clergymen about begged for mercy - but he would not yield: made the men feel what he did for them: from that time there has never been strike-trouble or murmur. ¹²⁶

At the time of writing this account of Captain Leslie to his father (31st Oct., 1859) Ruskin was in the process of collecting material for a series of essays dealing with class relations which were published in The Cornhill in 1860 and gathered together in one volume two years later as Unto This Last.

Throughout the turmoil created by the response to his political writings of the eighteen sixties and during his increasing bouts of depression and spiritual confusion, Ruskin always found solace in returning to Warrington. But the carefree days with the young girls and the "Old Lecturer" (as Ruskin styled himself) came to an end after nearly ten years. Miss Bell ran into serious financial difficulties, despite Ruskin's generous paying of many school accounts and even some children's fees. The lean years of the cotton famine also affected Warrington's fortunes. Anger over financial matters caused an irrevocable rupture between old friends. The last letter of Ruskin to Miss Bell that survives is dated 15th October, 1869.¹²⁷ With declining numbers and withdrawal of monetary help and loans from Ruskin, Miss Bell had to move from Warrington in 1873; a few pupils went with her to another location but in 1877 Miss Bell had to give up her school. Moving to London "The Lady of Warrington" then eked out a living giving private lessons, only to die in poverty in 1889 and be buried in an unmarked grave.¹²⁸

The Warrington letters are important because they are written "within the mainstream of Ruskin's emotional life."¹²⁹ Such life on many occasions the art critic tried to hide from public view: at the beginning of the writing of his diary Ruskin kept "one part for intellect and another part for feeling,"¹³⁰ but this latter part of the diary he subsequently destroyed. Through the records of his many visits to Warrington, however, a clearer picture of his inner life emerges, particularly of that most important episode, the hapless love for Rose La Touche, which had such a bearing on Ruskin's subsequent utopian schemes.

Like Adèle Domecq and Effie Gray, who were only twelve when Ruskin met them, Rose La Touche was only a child when she entered his life. By the spring of 1860 Ruskin was writing to the girls of Warrington about Rose

who was nine years old when they had first met in 1858:

I've got a dear little one however whom I'm really very fond of - a little eleven years old Rosie, who writes for me - the prettiest little poems you ever heard - and is full of play besides - but she's just gone to Ireland ... ¹³¹

Ruskin's literary executors burned the correspondence between him and Rose hence early biographers either minimized the influence of Rose, sometimes not even giving her name or else spoke casually about the relationship, patronizingly talking about Rosie.¹³² The survival of the diaries of Rose La Touche and their recent publication ¹³³ help create a different picture of a tragic relationship.

Rose La Touche came to know Ruskin because her mother had enjoined Lady Waterford, a mutual friend of the La Touches and Ruskin, to ask for art instruction for her daughter. At first Ruskin refused to teach Rose and recommended his assistant at the Working Men's College, William Ward, but later took on the task himself.

The La Touches were very wealthy. John La Touche owned a large private bank and had a vast estate and mansion at Harristown, twenty miles southwest of Dublin. For much of his life John La Touche had divided his time between his bank and his passion for horses and fox-hunting, but, at the time of meeting Ruskin, he had undergone a conversion and had become an earnest follower of the Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who was Ruskin's nearest rival to the title of being the most eloquent man in England. It has been claimed that Ruskin's description of his "unconversion" before Veronese's Solomon and Sheba was "exaggerated precisely to mock at the La Touches' belief in conversion experiences."¹³⁴

Rose, as she grew older, increasingly identified with her father's

Evangelical beliefs and the Baptist Church whereas her mother remained Anglican. Part of the mother's objection to Ruskin, it has been suggested, was not on the grounds of his newly found antagonism to Evangelicalism but because she was in love with Ruskin herself, being only four years younger than the suitor of her daughter.¹³⁵

Ruskin's love for Rose had quickened throughout the Warrington years and in "the missives to those schoolgirls one may hear the voice of Ruskin addressing the girl he loved."¹³⁶ In 1865 Ruskin wrote The Ethics of the Dust to capture the spirit and ideas of his conversations with the children at Warrington but the work may be read "almost as an allegory of his love for Rose"¹³⁷ just as the last two lectures of Sesame and Lilies, which had been read to the girls at Warrington before public delivery,¹³⁸ had been written to "please one girl".¹³⁹

A year after the publication of The Ethics of the Dust Ruskin proposed marriage to the eighteen year old Rose; she did not refuse him outright but asked him to wait another three years. He began marking off the days in his diary. The ensuing years are a harrowing story of illness, mental breakdowns, partings, reconciliations, and Rose's spiritual melancholia, culminating in her early death in 1875, probably from anorexia nervosa.¹⁴⁰

These years had also taken an appalling toll on Ruskin. In 1872 there had been hope of reconciliation when Rose had summoned him from Venice. There were a short few days when Ruskin "could not hold my pen for joy"¹⁴¹ but Rose became frightened by letters shown to her by a relative in which Ruskin had confessed to "sexual crimes" which had led Effie Millais to tell the La Touches (in reply to their enquiries) that he was a "monster".¹⁴² At their parting at Crewe Station Rose shrieked abuse at Ruskin,¹⁴³ wanting no more to do with him.

Shortly after Rose's death Ruskin attended a spiritualist seance in which he was persuaded that the dead girl was by his side. In turn this led, when he was in Venice, (1876), to his linking Rose with early Christian martyrs. Obsessed with Rose, many of his later writings are connected with her:

In the mental breakdowns of 1878, 1881, 1883, Rose is reconciled with Ruskin, helps him to fight against visions of hell and comes to found with him "a father phase of Christianity". All Ruskin's later books and activities must be considered in the still light of Rose's posthumous tutelage.¹⁴⁴

As Ruskin's obsession with Rose had grown, his interest in Winnington abated; but shortly after his final break with this school he was again drawn into educational ventures when elected Slade Professor of Art at Oxford: these are the years of Ruskin's reputation as an eccentric during which time the relationship with Rose was still dragging on its fateful course to her death at the age of twenty-seven in 1875.

After accepting the Slade professorship Ruskin worked on many different fronts at once: he gave series of lectures which he subsequently published, established and endowed the School of Drawing at Oxford, founded the Guild of St. George, and began a long series of letters known as Fors Clavigera, addressed to the working-men of England. He also established at Sheffield the St. George's Museum with its distinctive collection of objects. The random and eclectic nature of Ruskin's teaching collections at Oxford and Sheffield ran parallel with "the jumps and juxtapositions in the text of Fors Clavigera itself."¹⁴⁵

Outwardly, Ruskin was successful in many ways while Professor at Oxford despite the turmoil of his inner life which led to his complete breakdown. His first lecture series, in particular, attracted large numbers of listeners. These lectures, given in the Oxford Museum from which Ruskin refused to budge, often had to be given twice because large groups were particularly unmanageable given the large amount of visual material the professor and his assistants brought to the lecture hall. As well as the undergraduates, there was always a following of young ladies from the town who came to be edified. Senior academics, apart from some faithful friends, looked askance at the spectacle of Ruskin's public performances:

His lectures were like revivalist meetings. We may picture him - for there are many eyewitness accounts - dressed in a light home-spun tweed with a double-breasted waistcoat, an old-fashioned frock-coat, and an ample blue cravat. His gown, we are told, was discarded when its folds became too hopelessly involved. His eyes burned in the shadowy caverns beneath his brows, his hands moved continuously in suppressed gesticulation. As with all great orators it was the timbre of his voice which remained longest in his hearers' minds. ¹⁴⁶

Although a professor, Ruskin did not really want to lecture, least of all on the theory and history of art, but wanted instead to involve himself in a series of practical projects most of which were connected with his continued social concerns. Claiming he was the only person at Oxford 'who has got something definite to teach' ¹⁴⁸ he saw his teaching duties as having both a practical and critical emphasis:

... practical so that, if (the Oxford undergraduates) draw at all, they may draw rightly; and critical, so that, being first directed to such works of existing art as will best reward their study, they may afterwards make their patronage of living artists delightful to their consciousness of its justice, to the utmost, beneficial to their country, by being given to men who deserve it... ¹⁴⁹

This double function of the Slade Professorship was carried out by the establishment of the School of Drawing. Ruskin gave five thousand pounds for the school's endowment, enabling the appointment of a Master of Drawing, Alexander Macdonald. As a response to this generosity, the University assigned the western wing of its galleries in Beaumont Street for the Ruskin Drawing School and its many educational specimens. The drawings, paintings and engravings for this collection which still survive are housed in the University Galleries (in the Print Room of the Ashmolean Museum). For its part, the Ruskin School of Drawing in Oxford today is a vigorous institution even if Ruskin's name only is honoured rather than his teachings.

Ruskin's other attempts at practical ventures while at Oxford included persuading some undergraduates to build a road (the Hincksey Road diggings described in detail in Chapter 7) as well as founding the first and only Utopia recognized by the British Board of Trade, the Guild of St. George. The objectives and the educational activities of the Guild are the subject of later extended discussion (Chapter 9) but are briefly mentioned below because the Guild of St. George was a central concern for most of the last twenty years of Ruskin's productive life.

To promote the Guild, Ruskin gave a tenth of his possessions, seven thousand pounds, to the organization he established. The objects of the Guild were "to set the example of socialistic capital as opposed to a national debt, and of socialistic labour as opposed to the competitive struggle for life."¹⁵⁰ Guild members, following Ruskin's example, had to tithe and to do some form of work for a living as well as obey various prescribed moral and religious principles. On its part the Guild would buy land for agricultural members and water-powered mills and factories for other members, as well as providing places of instruction,

schools and libraries. To this latter end Ruskin wrote a series of text-books and edited a series of books, the Bibliotheca Pastorum, (The Shepherd's Library), which together with the St. George Museum collection remain a tangible aspect of the Guild's legacy. Some land was donated to the Guild - in Barmouth (Wales), Sheffield and the Lake District - but membership of the Guild remained small as it does to this day.¹⁵¹

In the midst of Ruskin's increasingly frantic activities, the tormented relationship with Rose La Touche, was still a constant preoccupation. At last Rose unequivocally rejected him after marriage had been proposed again in August 1872.¹⁵² Ruskin's letters in Fors Clavigera reflected his bitterness and despair¹⁵³ as much as his diary recorded his disturbed dreams. In one such dream Rose came and "gave herself to me as sweetly in body as Cressid to Troilus".¹⁵⁴

Ruskin found some relief from his increasingly wretched existence by making retreats to his country home, Brantwood, three miles from the village of Coniston in the Lake District. He thought that his house (purchased in 1871 and now preserved as a museum) possessed the finest views of lake and mountain in all of Cumberland and Lancashire. He also thought that buying the house was a particularly ironic purchase:

There certainly is a special fate in my getting this house. The man from whom I buy it - Linton - wanted to found a 'republic', printed a certain number of the Republic like my Fors Clavigera! and his printing press is still in one of the outhouses, and 'God and the People' scratched deep in the whitewash outside. Well, it won't be a 'republican centre' now but whether the lauded men round will like my Toryism better than his Republicanism, remains to be seen.¹⁵⁵

Increasingly, whenever his Oxford duties could spare him, Ruskin returned to Brantwood particularly pleased that he had bought for the first time his own house. As a respite from "the printing and lecturing that eats up my life", ¹⁵⁶ he enjoyed, as he recorded in his diary, "harbour-digging and planning garden terraces" ¹⁵⁷ as well as chopping his own wood and doing other chores. The manual labour he enjoyed at Brantwood Ruskin thought would also benefit his students at Oxford.

During the eighteen seventies, when frequently involved in new projects, Ruskin made drastic changes to the way he published his books. Beginning with having Fors Clavigera published by himself, he appointed a carpenter - engraver, George Allen (a student of Ruskin's from the days of the London Working Men's College) as his literary agent. Subsequently Allen became the distributor of all Ruskin's books at a fixed price whether to individuals or booksellers (the latter then had to add whatever percentage they chose).¹⁵⁸ This was a "pre-emptive strike at the whole system of credits, discounts, commissions and even advertising and was later modified to allow fixed discounts to the trade" ¹⁵⁹ but it nevertheless pioneered the Net Book Agreement. When Allen became the sole publisher of Ruskin's works in 1873 initially sales fell considerably because of the expense and difficulty of obtaining copies,¹⁶⁰ but gradually the demand grew for Ruskin's works and in 1887 he made four thousand pounds from his books that was particularly welcome as by now Ruskin had given away most of his fortune his parents had left him, either to individuals or to the Guild of St. George or to his other educational projects.

After two courses of lectures given between October and December, 1874, Ruskin lectured less at Oxford, giving nothing at all during the term when Rose was dying. His diary recorded "weak thoughts about giving up the

Professorship." ¹⁶¹ He roused himself to give a course on Reynold's Discourses in 1875 and was re-elected in 1876 although excused from duties - he did not resume lecturing till near the end of 1877.

During these years the torrent of Fors Clavigera continued, although the letters were published at increasingly irregular intervals. The July, 1877 issue of Fors contained the notorious attack on Whistler's Nocturnes in which Ruskin questioned the "Cockney impudence" ¹⁶² of asking for "two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."¹⁶³

The vehemence of Ruskin's attack against Whistler's Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket has given rise to psycho-analytic interpretations which stress that Ruskin's outbursts were not aesthetic judgements at all but reactions to his morbid fears of light bursting against gloomy backgrounds ¹⁶⁴ which can be traced back to childhood traumas.¹⁶⁵

Whatever the reasons for Ruskin's attack on Whistler it is clear that the art critic's mental health was very precarious at the time; he was still very weak after his "first great frenzied illness",¹⁶⁶ and did not appear in court when Whistler brought a legal suit for defamation against the critic. Ironically the champion of the Pre-Raphaelite avant-garde was now considered a reactionary.¹⁶⁷ He could not grasp that Whistler claimed the painting to be "principally an arrangement of light, form and colour."¹⁶⁸ Turner, assuredly had produced paintings with a similar emphasis but in those works Ruskin always had been able to find an underlying significance, so lacking, he felt, in Whistler's work.¹⁶⁹

The case went badly for Whistler. To begin with, the case took almost a year to come to court and such was Ruskin's power as an art critic that during this period the prolific Whistler did not sell a single painting.¹⁷⁰ Then came the court verdict, which pleased no one, although technically in

Whistler's favour: he was awarded a farthing's damages. Despite the artist's jaunty wearing of the farthing on his watch-chain, within six months he was bankrupt, having to pay his own court costs of two hundred pounds.¹⁷¹ Ruskin's costs, on the other hand, were paid for out of a special fund set up by his admirers.

Because Ruskin's behaviour at Oxford was becoming increasingly erratic it was to the benefit of all concerned when he sent his resignation from the Slade Professorship two days after the court verdict declaring that "I cannot hold a chair from which I have no power of expressing judgement without being taxed for it by British Law."¹⁷²

Freed from lecturing duties Ruskin continued several writing projects simultaneously: a new manual on drawing and art, The Laws of Fesole; a botany text-book, Proserpina; a geology text, Deucalion; the continuation of the Fors Clavigera letter series as well as immersing himself in translating Plato's Laws upon which he spent a great deal of time. From the mid-seventies onwards Ruskin's writings are very fragmented and dispersed, reflecting his tenuous hold on reality. As Jeanne Clegg has remarked, his later writings became identified only "to groups of people in specific places and occupations - students at Oxford, workmen in Sheffield, tourists on the spot in Amiens, Florence or Venice - and almost never to the abstract 'intellectual tradition' ",¹⁷³ with the exception of his Plato studies.

This period also produced increasing mental breakdowns. Shortly after the death of Carlyle, which was a great shock to Ruskin,¹⁷⁴ he suffered his second major collapse. His hallucinations, on this occasion, resulted in the breaking of windows. He later recalled that he had a particularly forceful dream in which "he had a kind of crucifixion to go through - and to found a further phase of Christianity and that Rose was as the

Magdalen to me." ¹⁷⁵

After travelling abroad in 1882 and subsequently feeling much better, Ruskin wrote to Oxford asking to resume the Slade Professorship. This was duly arranged and his first new series of lectures (subsequently published as The Art of England) were deliberately low-key both in content and manner of expression. Before long these self-imposed fetters became too limiting. Soon Ruskin became again a figure of public controversy.

On February 4th 1884, Ruskin delivered at the London Institute the first of two addresses jointly called "The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century" (the second lecture was merely an annotation of the first and given a week later). ¹⁷⁶ The lectures, illustrated by Ruskin's coloured drawings, were partly meant as scientific exposition and partly as prophecy. ¹⁷⁷ They created a considerable stir, were reported widely in the London newspapers and stand not only as Ruskin's last major public performance but also as an important summary of much of his later writings.

From 1871 onwards Ruskin had been disturbed by what he thought were ominous changes in the weather and made several entries in his diaries and Fors Clavigera about the sinister cloud and blighting wind sweeping across the country. There was a basis of fact in these observations: the production of coal in England had increased twenty-fold in the nineteenth century, and by far the sharpest increase was concentrated in the years immediately before Ruskin first observed his strange cloud. ¹⁷⁸ He described it as follows:

It looks partly as if it were made of poisonous smoke; very possibly it may be: there are at least two hundred furnace chimneys in a square of two miles on every side of me. But mere smoke would not blow to and fro in that wild way. It looks more to me as if it were made of dead men's souls - such of them as are not gone yet where they have to go and may be flitting hither and thither, doubting themselves of the fittest place for them. ¹⁷⁹

Although the effects of pollution and severe changes of weather were prosaic fact ¹⁸⁰ at the time of Ruskin giving his lecture he chose to invest the disturbances in the heavens with a dire warning. For one who had always loved sunsets and kept "clouds bottled up like his father's sherry" ¹⁸¹ (as he said off-handedly in this lecture) he now saw the clouds not as "symbols of purity, the imaginative spirit or the glory of God" ¹⁸² as described in Modern Painters I but instead as portents of "negation and despair". ¹⁸³

Despite Ruskin's meteorological speculations being "greeted with incredulity by the scientific division of the audience" ¹⁸⁴ the underlying intense seriousness of the lecture made a marked impact ¹⁸⁵ even if the sounds of the prophet and his manner of expression were more acceptable than the message:

What is best to be done, do you ask me? The answer is plain. Whether you can affect the signs of the sky or not, you can the signs of the times. Whether you can bring the sun back or not, you can assuredly bring back your own cheerfulness, and your own honesty. You may not be able to say to the winds, "Peace; be still", but you can cease from the insolence of your own lips, and the troubling of your own passions. And all that it would be extremely well to do, even though the day were coming when the sun should be as darkness, and the moon as blood. But, the paths of rectitude and piety once regained, who shall say that the promise of old time would not be found to hold for us also? - "Bring ye all the tithes into my storehouse, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord God, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." ¹⁸⁶

This was the last time Ruskin wore the prophetic mantle (outside Oxford); henceforth there would no more grand exhortations to the paths of righteousness given to large public audiences. In the seclusion of Brantwood he turned to the past instead of the iniquities of the present and wrote twenty-eight parts of Praeterita, which were issued one by one, over four years from July 1885 until July 1889, when the project becoming too painful was abandoned.¹⁸⁷ As originally planned the book was to have traced the course of his life until Rose's death in 1875, but instead ended with a section called "Joanna's Care", a tribute to Joan Severn, who had first come into the family to care for Margaret Ruskin and later nursed Ruskin through his illnesses, staying with her husband, Arthur, at Brantwood for the last decade of Ruskin's life.¹⁸⁸

Ruskin did give another series of lectures at Oxford in 1884. In the course of announcing these lectures The Pall Mall Gazette (17th October, 1884) drew attention to the overflow crowds that Ruskin attracted.¹⁸⁹ Many came no doubt not for edification, but amusement: by now Ruskin had become "a 'turn' not to be missed".¹⁹⁰ This last series of lectures were indeed an embarrassment. The wilder antics of the prophet were reported in the press and Ruskin's remaining Oxford friends were relieved when he resigned the Slade Professorship once more, ostensibly because of university approval for a physiological laboratory where vivisection would be practised. He never returned to Oxford.

Ruskin was seventy in February, 1889. A final breakdown in the summer left him incapable of further mental effort.¹⁹¹ In the next eleven years he wrote only five brief letters whereas he had once written upwards of twenty a day.¹⁹² There is dreadful stillness about the last decade of Ruskin's life; the eloquence at last silenced. Cared for by the devoted Joan Severn he lingered on at Brantwood. On the 20th January,

1900, death came lightly and quickly to Ruskin while he was asleep; for one who had found the claims of life so endless and so onerous the order of release had come at last.

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