

The Handwriting of John Ruskin.

FROM 31ST DECEMBER, 1828, TO 28TH NOVEMBER, 1884.

(Born 8th February, 1819.)

BY J. HOLT SCHOOLING.



N looking through the present collection of Mr. Ruskin's handwriting we shall, I think, see a fairly representative set of specimens, which are often very characteristic of their writer, who, indeed, can scarcely fail to be characteristic in any of his actions: limits of space have caused all the illustrations of this article to be reduced from the size of the originals, but this necessary reduction of size has not destroyed the character of the writing.

The beautiful little letter shown in No. 1 was written when the boy was in his tenth year; it is a good illustration of a clever French writer's description of elementary Art, or, rather, of the qualities that are factors of an elementary Art-sense—neatness, ornamentation, arrangement. The first and last qualities are plainly seen at a glance, and the

ornamentation of this pretty letter comes out in the studied printing of the year (1828), in other details, and probably in the choice of a specially fine piece of writing - paper — which perhaps had a lace border—by the little boy who sixty-seven years ago sat down to write this New Year's letter to his father. I have been enabled to include this Ruskin-gem by the kindness of Mr. George Allen, who sent me a fine facsimile of the original letter, which may be seen, full-size, in the large-paper edition of "The Poems of John Ruskin," collected and edited by W. G. Collingwood. Here is the "inclosed poem" mentioned in No. 1:—



No. 2.—One of several rough sketches of heads on the back of No. 3.

My dear papa

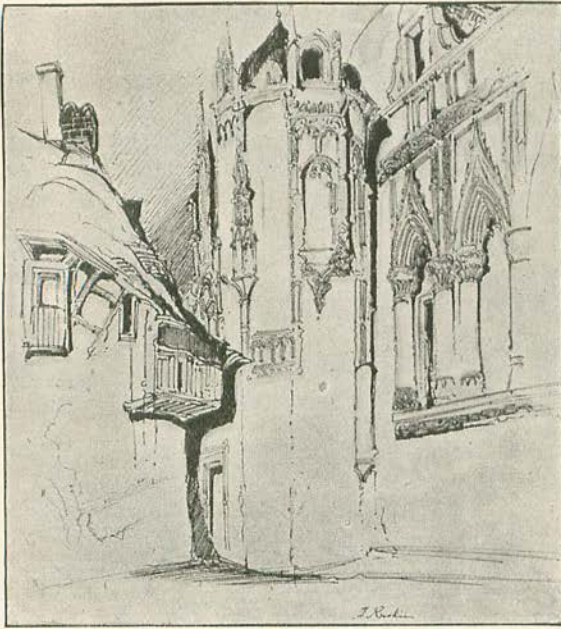
A good Newyear to you I at first intended to make for your Newyears present a small model of any early done thing and I thought I would try to make an orvery but at length I gave it up on considering how many different things were wanted and composed the inclosed poem with another short address to you but Mamma disliking my address and telling me to write a small letter to you I attempted though I will not say I have succeeded to do it which thing I hope you will accept however unworthy it be of your notice

*dear papa
your affectionate son
John Ruskin*

*Hornhill
December thirty first 1828*

But frightened was the preacher when
He heard all echoed down the glen
The music of the clans.
'Twas martial music, and around
Well echoed was the beautiful sound,
By valley, rock, and hill.
It died away upon the ear,
And spread abroad, now there, now here,
And gathered strength again.
And now the flute and now the drum,
Mingling upon the winds they come,
And die away again.
Another strain, another sound,
And now 'tis silence all around—
The martial music's gone.

This poem, like many of John Ruskin's early writings, was most beautifully and carefully written, after the fashion of printed letters. As we are now mainly concerned with Ruskin's handwriting, it is in-



No. 3.—An architectural drawing by John Ruskin. About 1840—42.

teresting to say that he refused to be taught to read and write in the orthodox way by syllabic spelling and copy-book pot-hooks. He preferred to find a way for himself, and so, by the time he was four years old, had taught himself to write in vertical characters, like printed letters. He found out how to read whole words at a time by the look of them. At five he was a bookworm, and his first dated poem was written a month before little John Ruskin reached the age of seven; it is a tale of a mouse, "The Needless Alarm."

The originals of Nos. 2 and 3 are in the collection of Mr. A. E. Cropper, of Birkdale, Lancashire, who very kindly lent the fine architectural drawing seen in No. 3, and which is thought to be part of Stirling Palace; the back of this drawing is covered with rough sketches of heads and pencil jottings of algebraic equations; specimens of these are faintly visible in No. 2. The letter of which a part is shown in No. 4 was written at age 27—28, to his publisher, Mr. George Smith (of Smith, Elder), and it contains a reference to "Modern Painters," the second volume of this work being published in the year 1846. This is an example of Mr. Ruskin's early handwriting, almost as different from the later style as from that of the boy's letter in No. 1. Very likely a volume of "Wit and Humour," pub-

lished in 1846, might not have attracted the man who then wrote that wit and humour are "... two characters of intellect in which I am so eminently deficient as never even to have ventured upon a conjecture respecting their real nature." Be this as it may, Mr. Ruskin's works and letters do not quite bear out this opinion of his own deficiency, and he certainly could show the humorous side of an incident. Take, for example, this extract from Mr. Ruskin's account of his old nurse Anne, who had nursed him as a baby:—

... And she had a very creditable and republican aversion to doing immediately, or in set terms, as she was bid; so that when my mother and she got old together, and my mother became very imperative and particular about having her teacup set on one side of her little round table, Anne would observantly and punctiliously put it always on the other; which caused my mother to state to me, every morning after breakfast, gravely, that if ever a woman in this world was possessed by the Devil, Anne was that woman.

At another time, four years prior to the date of No. 4, and, therefore, when Mr. Ruskin was in his twenty-fourth year, he wrote from Dijon to a clerical friend a very fine letter, which I cannot show here, but from which I quote the following: "... And so, my cool fellow, you don't

My Dear Sir

I ought before to have
 thanked you for your obliging
 present of "Wit & Humour".
 - Two characters of intellect in
 which I am so eminently deficient
 as never even to have ventured
 upon a conjecture respecting their
 real nature
 believe a copy of the second

Dear Richmond.

My friend Mary gave
me the enclosed key—one evening
at your house—the morning
it to be the key of your Daguerre
—It does not look like the key of
of the pantry—nor of the street door.
—so it is not likely to be of use to
me—and if it be a key of knowledge,
I am sure it will be to her—so
so I send it back—with my
love—Yours ever affectionately
Ruskin—By the way

No. 5.—Written in 1848. Age 29—30.

find any 'refreshment' in my poems. . . .
'Refreshments,' indeed! Hadn't you better
try the ale-house over the way next time? It
is very neat of you—after you have been putting
your clerical steam on, and preaching half the
world to the de—(I beg pardon—what was
I going to say?) I back again—to pull up at
Parnassus expecting to find a new station and
'refreshment' rooms fitted up there for your
especial convenience—and me as the young
lady behind the counter—to furnish you with a
bottle of ginger-pop. . . ."

My dear Watson

Would you be so kind as to say to the
people who ship my baggage for Venice that I
would rather the things were left on their arrival
in the hands of their agent, until I come, as I
do not want to trouble any of my friends with
them. Also to thank Mr. Ritchie very much
for the piece of the wall of China—though I am
sorry the bricks in our country are bad, and
not of the idiom of Blue Pill. Ever
most truly Yours
J. Ruskin.

No. 6.—Written June 28, 1852. Age 33—34.

The reduction in size renders No. 5 not
quite so easy to read as the original, so I
give a transcript of it:—

Dear Richmond,—My friend Mary gave me the
enclosed key—one evening at your house—she
supposing it to be the key of my daguerreotype. It
does not look like the key of the pantry—nor of the
street door—so it is not likely to be of use to me—
and if it be a key of knowledge, I am sure it will be
to her—and so I send it back—with my love.

The spontaneity and naturalness of John
Ruskin's nature are very clearly reflected in
the gesture of his handwriting; one does not
often see writing which shows so plainly as

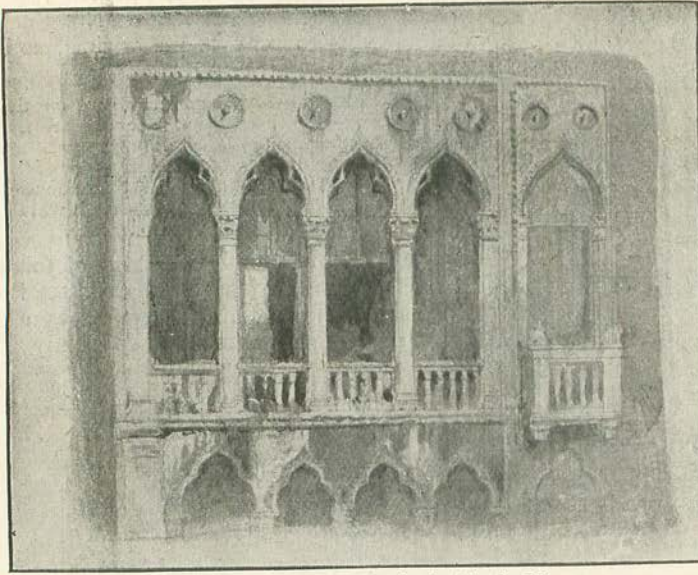
in the world—here & there—the
most of it is—most of them are
not to be foolish—I am more
affected & wondrously by
people's absurdity than any
thing else in the world—do
then—what wonderful power
a single fool has—the wrong way
But you know all your amargance
as well as mine—comes of
their disbelief—If you really
suffer then is a master to
the household you have
nothing to do but to attend to
his business & be quiet & comfortable
Truly Yours.

Ruskin Always yours

No. 7.—Written February 5, 1856.
Age 36—37.

No. 5, for example, these salient
traits of character, and even a
tyro in the art of deducing
individualistic qualities from
handwriting can see that there
is no *arrière-pensée* in the mind
of the man whose written-ges-
ture we are examining—it is too
impulsive to admit of dissimu-
lation.

No. 6 was written a few years
later, when Ruskin was setting
out again for Venice for a spell
of work on the palaces and
churches, and now more draw-
ings were to be made for



No. 8.—From the original drawing by John Ruskin.

“Stones of Venice.” John Ruskin asks his friend “. . . to thank Mr. Ritchie very much for the piece of the Wall of China—though I am very glad the bricks in our country are Red, and not of the colour of a Blue Pill.” An interval of nearly four years passes before we reach No. 7, which is the end of a letter sent to an artist friend, who still possesses the original. After encouraging his correspondent about his work, “which is very good, though I can’t give you much for it, or I should unjustifiably raise the hopes of the other men,” Ruskin went on: “We must finish a little more before we can command price.” Needless to say this was before the coming of the “impressionist” school of artists, with a blur of colour put on to canvas in a few hours, and a fee of two hundred guineas or so paid for the result. Perhaps most people, except the impressionists themselves, have a preference for pictures that at any rate show something resembling design, being guided perhaps by a feeling akin to that which, in Mr. W. S. Gilbert’s *Bab*

Ballad—“Ellen McJones Aberdeen”—impelled Mr. Pattison Corby Torbay to beseech the Highland bagpiper:—

Macphairson Clong-
locketty Angus,
my lad,
With pibrochs and

*You may comfort the young lady whose
hand runs away with her by telling her
that when once she has bridled it, probably
she will find many places where she can give
it a pleasant canter, or even put it to speed—
in sketches from nature. But it must be well
bridled—Horseshod perhaps would be a better
word. I put.*

No. 9.—Written July 9, 1858. Age 39—40.

reels you are driving me mad.

If you really must play on that cursed affair, My goodness! play something resembling an air.

Impressionist pictures, like the bagpipes, are a form of high Art which appeals only to the initiated.

After the signature in No. 7 there was the kindly message: “Always write to me when it does you good, as it does *me* good too.”

The artist-owner of the original drawing from which No. 8 has been copied—it shows some of the stones of Venice—said to me as he took the drawing from his portfolio: “I think this is the

most wonderful piece of work of its kind that I have ever seen—its delicacy and finish are marvellous.” Truly they are—you actually see the balcony in Venice, and the stone is real stone, with extraordinarily minute details of weatherwear and age-marks subtly shown by the finest and most carefully judged work. It is, of course, impossible to reproduce the true effect by any process of illustration available for a magazine each page of which is printed by hundreds of thousands, but No. 8 serves to suggest what an admirable piece of work the original of it must be.

The next specimen, No. 9, is the last paragraph of a long letter sent from the Borromean Islands, Lago Maggiore, Italy, in Mr. Ruskin’s fortieth year. It was written on thin foreign paper, and the ink has become faint, so perhaps a transcript of this interesting passage will be useful:—

You may comfort the young lady whose hand runs away with her by telling her that when once she has bridled it properly, she will find many places where she can give it a pleasant canter—or even put it to speed—in sketching from Nature. But it must be

half past seven o'clock

Ever affectionately yours

J. Ruskin

I'm so glad you like those economy papers. The next will be a smasher. I'm only afraid they won't put it in - If they don't, I'll print it separate.

No. 10.—Written October 1, 1860. Age 41—42.

well bitted (braceletted perhaps would be a better word) first.—Always most truly yours, J. RUSKIN.

There is a very interesting allusion to *Unto this Last* in No. 10, which is a sentence written at the end of a letter dated October 1st, 1860: "I'm so glad you like those economy papers—the next will be a smasher." The "economy papers" (forming *Unto this Last*) were then in course of issue in the *Cornhill Magazine*, and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. The "next" would be Chapter IV., *Ad Valorem*, which appeared in the *Cornhill* for November, 1860.

No. 11 was taken from a letter addressed to Mrs. Carlyle from Luzern in December, 1861, and written to her husband also: it is a specially fine letter, and at the end of it John Ruskin wrote: "I've no patience with the Swiss—now—nor with anybody; myself included. Good-bye.—Ever your affectionate, J. RUSKIN." There was a close friendship and mutual regard between Carlyle and Ruskin, which began about 1850; and, later, when Ruskin took up

social and economical work, Carlyle's esteem for him was increased. The younger man wrote and spoke as a disciple of the elder, and in some of his letters addressed Carlyle as a pupil addresses his master, or as a son writes to his father—"Ever, dear papa, your affectionate, J. RUSKIN"; or, "Ever your faithful and loving servant and son, JOHN RUSKIN." On one occasion, in 1865, Ruskin, hating tobacco, sends his "master" cigars, and Carlyle wrote:—

Dear Ruskin,—You have sent me a munificent Box of Cigars; for which what can I say in answer? It makes me both sad and glad. . . .

We are such stuff,
Gone with a puff—
Then think, and smoke tobacco!

The generosity which is so marked a trait of Ruskin's nature comes out in No. 12, which is but one of many similar letters I have seen. This letter was written to an

Dear Ward.

But thanks for the letter; I know of the clothing. I would gladly give 2 1/2 guineas which I believe is the trade price plus ten shillings - for the freeable. I can't afford to buy any more. wish I could. but I get requests now on the average for about fifty pounds a week - and all difficult to refuse - though sometimes necessary. You credit won't fail however. I enclose 5/- and am always affectionately yours. J. Ruskin

No. 12.—Written in 1862. Age 43—44.



No. 11.—Written December 22, 1861. Age 42—43.

artist of whose work Ruskin thought highly:—... "I get requests now on the average for about fifty pounds a week, and all difficult to refuse, though sometimes necessary. Your credit won't fail however. . . ." There is a piece of sound

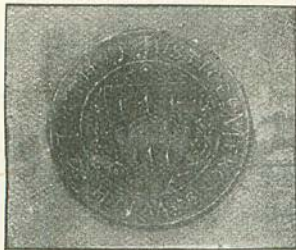
My dear Ward.
 My 4 Chancelor St. Perhaps
 these a Chancelor St. Strand. I am
 made anxious by your letter for fear
 something has gone wrong with
 my wash paper for Fosses.
 Don't cover your paper so with lines
 Use fewer. and think about them



Very affectionately yours.
 J. Ruskin

No. 13.—Written February 15, 1863. Age 44—45.

advice to a draughtsman in No. 13, and, in the shell there drawn, a good practical illustration of the advice: "Don't cover your paper so with lines. Use fewer, and think about them." The next illustration, No. 14, is rather a curiosity: it was lent to me by a gentleman who has a large collection of Ruskin's sketches, letters, etc., and he told me that one day, many years ago, when he was at the Denmark Hill house, its master showed him a sketch of a design like No. 14, which Ruskin was just then making, and which embodied the initials of the famous landscape painter, Joseph Mallord William Turner, in the motto round the design—With Truth, Justice, Mercy. Some few years ago, my informant came across the original of No. 14 on the cover of a book he bought at a second-hand shop, and he tells me that he believes it to be a print of the completed design which he saw in the making.



No. 14.—A sort of book-label, designed by John Ruskin, embodying the initials of Turner, the painter (J. M. W. T.).

written at the end of No. 15 by the man who had put his name on the front of the cheque, and whose handwriting here shown must have been pleasant reading to the lady who was told

to indorse the cheque which went with this kind letter.

Many of Mr. Ruskin's letters contain "thumb-nail" sketches of Turner's pictures, and one of these is shown in No. 16 as a fairly representative example.

Special interest attaches to the little note in No. 17. It was dated 17th May 1871, and on the 1st of January in that year a small pamphlet was issued, headed "Fors Clavigera," in the form of a letter to the working-men and labourers of England; dated from Denmark Hill, and signed "John Ruskin." It was not advertised, and no arrangements were made for its sale by the booksellers; it was sold by Mr. George Allen, at Heathfield Cottage, Keston, Kent, at sevenpence a copy, carriage paid, no discount, and no abatement on taking a quantity—and yet it was sold, and sold in considerable numbers. Mr. Ruskin once said: "The public has a very long nose, and scents out what it wants, sooner or later." In No. 17 he wrote to a friend: "I am glad you like *Fors*. People will find it a very intrusive 'dream' in a little while, if I live." Two or three weeks earlier than the date of this letter Carlyle had written to Ruskin: "This *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 5th, which I

Dear Mr Ward

I enclose you a cheque for 10. with great pleasure at the same time in being able to tell you that your husband is doing beautiful work. and I hope, will in future be happily confident in his own power. and sufficiently prosperous in their excess for his entire comfort and yours.

Very truly yours

J. Ruskin

Put your name on the back of the cheque.

No. 15.—Written November 13, 1867. Age 48—49.



No. 16.—Written December 18, 1869. Age 50—51.

have just finished reading, is incomparable ; a quasi-sacred consolation to me, which almost brings tears into my eyes! Continue, while you have such utterances in you, to give them voice. They will

1871

Denmark Hill,
S.E.

I am glad you like *Two*
People will find it a very
interesting "dream": in a letter which
if I live.

Yours always faithfully
J. Ruskin

No. 17.—Written May 17, 1871. Age 52—53.

find and force entrance into human hearts." In the same year, Mr. Ruskin proved his sincerity when he put down his own money, £7,000, the tenth of what he had, as he recommended his adherents to do. The newspapers, and people generally, could not understand a man who practised what he preached at the cost of self-interest, and it is likely that one of the many false reports about John Ruskin occasioned the letter to which No. 18 is a characteristic reply: "Dear Mr. Talling, — Never believe anything you hear about me — nobody knows anything about me." This was dated 20th September, 1871.

The spontaneous generosity of John Ruskin's nature is shown not less plainly by his handwriting than by his actions and words, and now that we have seen more than a dozen specimens of his written-gesture at different dates, it is worth while to specially refer to another side of his character which has too often been misunderstood.

Lately, a friend said to me when I was reading to him a passage from one of Ruskin's letters, "He's a very conceited man," meaning by "conceited," not the old sense of the word—*endowed with fancy or imagination, ingenious*—but the modern sense—*endowed with vanity and egotism*. For the life of me I cannot see this modern version of conceit in Ruskin: vanity and egotism usually show themselves plainly in a man's handwriting (see, if you care for an explanation of this, my paper called "Written-Gesture," in the *Nineteenth*

Dear Mr Talling

never believe anything
you hear about me. nobody
knows anything about me —

No. 18.—Written September 20, 1871. Age 52—53.

Century for March, 1895), and they are not to be seen in these specimens we are looking at. This is not the first instance I have found where a man's intellectual independence has been mistaken for selfishness, or for vanity, or for something quite different from what it is. Ruskin has always spoken his thoughts plainly, and if he has had occasion to speak ill or well of his own work, or of anybody

else's, surely this plain speech ought not to be mistaken for egotism or for vanity. I do not wish to attach an undue importance to the evidence as to character which is given by a man's handwriting, but this particular trait of vanity or conceit is so plainly disclosed in handwriting, that I cannot omit to mention the baselessness of this very much mistaken opinion about John Ruskin's "conceit."

"Mr. Ruskin on Railways" has often been the heading of a newspaper paragraph; his dislike of them has been the text of a good deal of misrepresentation, and his use of them, at all, has often been quoted as an inconsistency. We see, in No. 19, the words: "Heaven stop the steam demon from helping either you or me there." Mr. W. G. Collingwood, who for many years has been in a position to know Mr. Ruskin's opinions about railways, says that, as a matter of fact, he has never objected to main lines of communication, but that he has strongly objected, in common with a vast number of people, to the introduction of railways into districts whose chief interest is in their scenery: especially where, as in the English Lake district, the scenery is in miniature, easily spoiled by embankments and

My dear Ward

I am very glad you are safe at home again.

I wrote again about a fortnight since to Mr. Collected, asking how you were & get away but I suppose you did not get my letter - Heaven stop the steam demon from helping either you or me there. But God willing, I'll see I this coming summer.

I look anxiously for the drawings. That monthlight will be most wonderful -
— your affectionate friend

RR

My dear Madam

Where is Knife Ground?
Who teaches there? What is taught there? To whom is it taught? And why will you be obliged to me if I subscribe to it.

I must at least ask you kindly to answer the first four of these questions before I can do so

Very truly Yours,

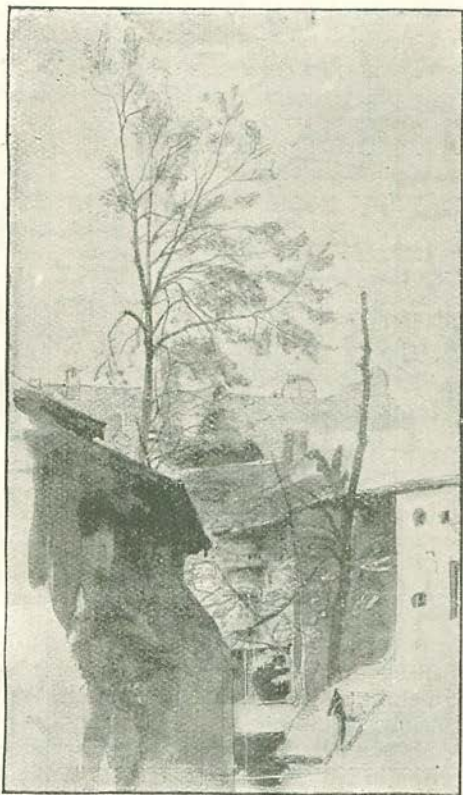
J. Ruskin

viaducts, and by the rows of ugly buildings which usually grow up round a station, and where the beauty of the landscape can only be felt in quiet walks and drives through it. Once, when Ruskin was on the brink of a serious illness, he wrote in violent language to a correspondent who tried to "draw" him on the subject of another proposed railway to Ambleside; but his real opinions, says Mr. Collingwood, are simple enough, and consistent with a practicable scheme of life.

In this Magazine, when dealing with "The Handwriting of Thomas Carlyle" (October, 1894), I showed a passage from a letter written by Carlyle in the year 1820, which reads:—

I like to see a friend write from the heart—somewhat in earnest—tho' it be a little in dishabille. It indicates at least the absence of excessive caution—a Scottish quality—but one which I am not patriot enough to respect very highly.

Later than 1820, Carlyle must have seen the style of handwriting he liked to see when reading Ruskin's letters to himself, and Thomas Carlyle's deduction as to character is certainly substantiated by the specimens now before us, which plainly suggest the unsuspecting habit that accompanied John Ruskin's unselfishness. By the time No. 20 was written, 1875, Ruskin had necessarily become less responsive



No. 21.—From the original water-colour sketch by John Ruskin.

than in earlier years to the appeals of numerous strangers who asked him for money, some of whom undoubtedly took advantage of a generosity which they scorned as a weakness. This No. 20 is an amusing reply to one of these applications:—

My dear Madam,—Where is Knife Ground? Who teaches there? What is taught there? To whom is it taught? And why will you be obliged to me if I subscribe to it? I must, at least, ask you kindly to answer the first four of these questions before I can do so.

Illustration No. 21 is from a much larger water-colour sketch, that was lent to me by a collector who has many of Ruskin's original drawings, and who tells me that this is part of a view seen from his hotel window when Ruskin was abroad. In connection with Mr. Ruskin's work as an artist, it is interesting to read what he wrote in 1867 to a correspondent whom he advised to copy Turner:—

I think you ought to fix your mind on this Turner work quite as the thing you *have to do*. You know me well enough to trust me that I do not say this to keep you captive for my own purposes. If I thought you could be a successful artist, I would not let you copy. But I think your

art gifts are very like mine: *perfect* sense of colour, great fineness of general perception, and hardly any invention. You *might* succeed in catching the public with some mean fineness of imitation, and live a useless, though pecuniarily successful, life; but even that would be little likely. Whereas, in rendering Turner, you will live a useful life; and I think very probably, a highly prosperous one. [Mr. Ruskin had this Turner copying very much at heart, hoping by the means of *facsimile* copies to spread the knowledge of the works of this great master.]

There is a special interest about No. 22, the

I fancy the always doing everything in a hurry has been very bad for me. I recollect my father used to write his long business letters thus, his hand never hastening nor slackening, and I fancy work can go on long thus. But I have to keep up with my thoughts and then all goes so—and that wears even all your JR

No. 22.—Written February 25, 1875. Age 56—57.

end of a letter written to Mr. George Allen, because Mr. Ruskin makes some remarks about his own handwriting as compared with his father's—which he imitates for three or four lines—and this circumstance, with the inference he draws from the two handwritings, renders No. 22 a very appropriate specimen to be shown in this article. I owe it to the kindness of Mr. Ruskin's publisher, who drew my attention to the very interesting passage here shown in *facsimile*:—

I fancy the always doing everything in a *hurry* has been very bad for me. I recollect my father used to write his long business letters thus, his hand never hastening nor slackening, and I fancy work can go on long thus. But I have to keep up with my thoughts, and then all goes so—and that wears soon.

It may be well to point out that No. 23, a

If this assumed weather stops photography a great deal I want to see it, as the Devil really deserves some credit. — 5 percent at least
Ever affected & sincere
JR

No. 23.—Written February 29, 1876. Age 57—58.

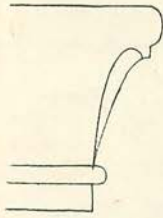
very characteristic bit, was written in the month of February, when fog or dull weather may have caused Ruskin to impatiently exclaim:—

If this accursed weather stops photography—just when I want to use it—the Devil really deserves some credit—5 per cent. at least.

No. 24, with its expression of pleasure and satisfaction with “the woodcuts,” refers to some of the illustrations for “Stones of Venice,” and contains a slight architectural sketch marked “Fig. 9,” and initialed “J. R.”

One of the most interesting pieces of Mr. Ruskin's handwriting here shown is No. 25, written to a Blackburn artisan, Mr. John T. Bacon, who had asked Ruskin to bring out a

Fig 9 . JR .



I scarcely knew
how you work
from the woodcut,
and am highly
edified by it.
Brentford.
For Sept 6th. 29th Aug.
Ruskin 78

No. 24.—Written August 29, 1878. Age 59—60.

cheap edition of “Queen of the Air.” As this is a contribution to the study of the mythology and beliefs of the Greeks, and of ancient Greek art and morals, we are not surprised to read in No. 25 that: “I should never have thought of asking the British workman to read it—and I doubt if you are a fair specimen of him.” The doubt is perhaps justifiable. I found, by asking Mr. George Allen, that the “gratis letter” to be sent to this British workman was the letter on Trade Unions published in “Fors Clavigera,” and—as were some other letters—later on sold or given away separately. I have not been able to ascertain if Mr. Bacon got the “hundred signatures of real workmen,

My dear Sir,

Yes, the Queen of the Air
was a great delight to myself; but
I should never have thought of
asking the British workman to
read it, — and I doubt if you are
a fair specimen of him. I have
told my publisher, to whom I
forward your letter, to send you
a copy of the gratis letter; and
I will think over the expediency of
a cheap edition of the Queen — if
you can get a hundred signatures
of real workmen, in Blackburn or
elsewhere — asking for it.

Very truly
Yrs.

Mr. John T. Bacon.

J. Ruskin

No. 25.—Written in 1879. Age 60—61.

in Blackburn or elsewhere, asking for it”—for a cheap edition of “Queen of the Air.” Probably, he did not.

Part of a letter to a clerical correspondent is given in No. 26. It was written at Brantwood in 1879, and begins:—

My dear Sir,—I am obliged by your reply—and trust that you will some day know enough of me to recognise the difference between plainness and discourtesy. You choose to waste your life in reading literature intentionally corrupt—as a natural consequence—you make inquiries of persons unable to answer you—but who are disturbed by your questions,

you
think I discovered in the
man whose time you have
wasted, to advise you to read
no more nonsense. But
you have, I believe, sense
enough to discover, some day,
— that the advice was sound
— and your impression undone.

Yours faithfully
Yrs.

J. Ruskin

No. 26.—Written May 3, 1879. Age 60—61.

How wide is the circle of my patients and yours - after my forty years of talk?
 Ever affected & yours.
 J.R.

No. 27.—Written April 19, 1881. Age 62—63.

go away saddened, instead of strengthened, by your society—and cause instantly great trouble and waste of time to other people. [Then comes the piece shown in No. 26.] You think it discourteous in the man whose time you have wasted, to advise you to read no more nonsense. But you have, I believe, sense enough to discover, some day, that the advice was sound—and your impression *unsound*.

Perhaps, when he received this letter, the clergyman to whom it was addressed regretted having written the accusation of discourtesy which brought back the sufficiently caustic reply just quoted.

Another caustic letter, which lately was again in the market, but which has escaped my search, is the famous reply sent to a person who, in May, 1886, asked Mr. Ruskin for some money to pay the debt on a chapel. It was written when Ruskin was suffering from the first attack of an illness brought on by strain and overwork, a circumstance

which accounts for the unusual violence of his language:—

Sir,—I am scornfully amused at your appeal to me, of all people in the world the precisely least likely to give you a farthing! My first word to all men and boys who care to hear me is, "Don't get into debt; starve and go to Heaven—but don't borrow. Try first begging; I don't mind, if it's really needful, stealing! But don't buy things you can't pay for! And, of all things you can't pay for, pious people building churches they can't pay for are the most detestable nonsense to me. Can't you preach and pray behind the hedges—or in a sand-pit, or in a coal-hole—first? And, of all manner of churches thus idiotically built, iron churches are the damnablest to me. And, of all the sects of believers in any ruling spirit—Hindoos, Turks, Feather idolaters, and Mumbo Jumbo, Log and Fire Worshippers, who want churches, your modern English Evangelical sect is the most absurd, and entirely objectionable and unendurable to me! All which they might very easily have found out from my books—any other sort of sect would!—before bothering me to write it to them. Ever, nevertheless, and in all this saying, your faithful servant, JOHN RUSKIN.

The recipient of this unique letter promptly sold it—not for £10 as has been stated, but

I am extremely interested by your frank account of jeweller's business. (I think I shall set up for a jeweller myself if one can roll in diamonds for nothing!)—but here's your postal cheque, & please send me the amount of the other bill usually will have it on Clerkenwell. I am as glad as you can be though for less commercial reasons, that Lord Brassey is interesting himself in Spals,

No. 29.—Written November 28, 1884. Age 65—66.

for one guinea—and so got something towards the debt on his iron chapel, which chapel, by the way, is about a hundred yards from the window where I sit writing; it is now a solid building of brick and stone, and has lately been "done up."

Fourteen years have gone since John Ruskin asked the question in No. 27: "How

Frankford,
 Co. Down, Ireland

Thursday -
 (some day or other of 1883)

Dear Miss Riddle,

Yes I was dreadfully crushed by that postcard's news, - because you know, though they is so irresistible, and they is so beautiful - yet you were my first love, - and then they don't know anything about Ireland - do they now, do they? - So you really must not call me like that from this any more: - I wonder what you'll answer to my telegram - I shall be thinking of nothing else all day, if I may come

Ever your love J.R.

P.S.

Don't fix the hair quite so high, this time.

No. 28.—Written to a child-friend in 1883. Age 64—65.
 The original of this letter is in the possession of Messrs. Noel Conway, 50a, New Street, Birmingham, who kindly lent it for this paper.

wide is the circle of my patrons and yours—after my forty years of talk?" It is, of course, impossible to say how many people have been influenced by Ruskin's teaching, but however many these be, it is safe to say that the influence has been healthy and often helpful. As regards the circulation of his books, an estimate made in 1893 gave the number of bound volumes issued by Messrs. Smith and Elder and by Mr. George Allen, exclusive of parts and pamphlets, as about 300,000. This does not represent the number of copies of Ruskin's works in circulation throughout the world, for numerous American publishers converted the enormous popularity of his works into a gigantic piracy, which went on for years; one of these publishers alone sending on an average five hundred sets of "Modern Painters" to Europe every year, the greater number to

England. And this example was followed by other New York publishers.

No. 28 is one of several beautiful little letters written to children which have been sent to me for inclusion, and for which there is no space. No. 29 was written to a dealer in precious stones from whom Mr. Ruskin bought many specimens for his collection of gems. Of late years Mr. Ruskin has written very little, deputing this work to his secretaries, and although I have found one or two specimens of later date, they have no special interest.

No. 30 is a page from the rough copy of "Fors Clavigera," which has escaped the destruction which, in nearly every instance, followed the writing out of a fair copy—by an assistant—of Mr. Ruskin's original manuscripts. They were then torn up and destroyed.

A certain portion of the work of man must be for his bread: and that is his Labour; - with the sweat of his face, for accomplished as a daily task - and ended as a daily task - with the prayer - Give us each day our daily bread. But another portion of man's work is that in which according to his ^{separate} power, gift and strength, he carries forward the purposes of God for his Race: accepts from his Sires their ^{Wisdom} ^{and} ^{their} Knowledge and Art; adds to it his store of true craftsman's culture - bequeaths his ^{own} piece and ^{work} as a part of the immortal of work of his Works - to the future. be it here in his own place - ^{and the prayer for} ^{year} ^{the work of our hands, establish this in} ^{they will be done on earth as} ^{it is in Heaven} ^{honestly, in our own life? today} ^{is our 'labour'.}

No. 30.—Part of a page from the rough copy of "Fors Clavigera" (1874).

Lent by Messrs. Methuen & Co., by permission of Mr. W. G. Collingwood, M.A., the author of "The Life and Work of John Ruskin."

NOTE.—I thank, for valuable aid given to me when collecting material for this paper, Mrs. Arthur Severn, Mr. George Allen, Mr. W. G. Collingwood, M.A.; Mr. A. E. Cropper, Messrs. Noel Conway, autograph dealers, of 508, New Street, Birmingham; Mr. Samuel Davey, Mr. William Ward, Messrs. Methuen and Co., and specially Mr. Thomas J. Wise, the bibliographer of John Ruskin.—J. H. S.