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Ruskin : Renaissance

Edited by

J. Howard Whitehouse

President of the Ruskin Society

Geoffrey Cumberlege
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London
1946

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NOTE BY THE EDITOR

THE addresses contained in this book were given at a luncheon in London on 8 February 1946 to commemorate Ruskin's birthday. In themselves they provide the justification for the title under which they now appear. The company heard not only the impressive testimony of members of a parliament now actively engaged in the passage of legislation based upon those principles set forth with unrivalled eloquence and prophetic vision. They heard also the testimony of a great ambassador of the United States of the influence of Ruskin not only upon himself but upon the people of his own country.

Ruskin's own University has now the opportunity not only of caring for his home and its treasures, but of carrying his message to the people through the Adult Education College to be built in the grounds of Brantwood in co-operation with the Lancashire Education Committee.

Let me express my personal hope that the institution of university reading parties at Brantwood, for which I have laboured, may fire some of their members with an informed enthusiasm which nothing shall quench.

J. H. W.

May, 1946

I

J. HOWARD WHITEHOUSE

PRESIDENT OF THE RUSKIN SOCIETY

I RISE to propose the toast to the immortal memory of John Ruskin, and in a few moments it will be my privilege to invite Mr. Winant, the Ambassador of the United States, to speak in support of the toast, but I want first to say something about our distinguished guest. During the five years that he has represented his great country here he has won not only the confidence but the affection of everyone. He has greatly strengthened the ties between the two countries and he has been, and is, a great ambassador of peace and understanding.

I should like to add this: Ruskin's teaching has always made a great appeal in America. One of his closest friends was Charles Eliot Norton, who held a distinguished position at Harvard University. The two men travelled together frequently in Italy and other places, they exchanged numerous letters; two volumes of the letters which Norton received from Ruskin were published first in America, and it is at Harvard that, thanks to Charles Eliot Norton, there is a collection of Ruskin's wonderful watercolour drawings.

There is, therefore, this interesting fact to record: that Ruskin's books and work have led to greater friendship and understanding between the two nations.

Charles Eliot Norton was one of the executors appointed by Ruskin in his Will. He was frequently his guest at Brantwood, and the friendship of these two men has been an important influence in promoting sympathy and understanding between their countries.

It is 127 years since Ruskin was born. Nearly three-quarters of a century ago he was advocating those social reforms which to-day are passing through Parliament with the assent, I believe, of every political party. (He is the author) in the sense that he was the inspiring force (of the main schemes which we know as Social Security which are

now being passed into law, and I need not remind you that when three-quarters of a century ago Ruskin was advocating these reforms he was received with universal execration. A great change has come. There is not a single man in the House of Commons to-day who has risen in his place to deny the responsibility of the State to make provision for social security for every member of the country.

That is one of the justifications for the honour which we pay to him to-day. I want briefly to mention a few other things which we owe to him.

(He really taught this country all that they know about the art of the past and the art of his own day. He had, I suppose, more influence than anyone of modern times in revealing the wonders of art, the beauty of the Old Masters, and of the Modern Masters too.) The thoughts of men about art are in a very confused state at the present time. This is partly owing, I think, to the war. There has recently been an exhibition of Picasso pictures about which I ventured to make a few remarks in public which were not wholly favourable. There is present with us to-day the distinguished editor of a paper that has no rival, and therefore it does not need to advertise its circulation figures—I refer, of course, to our friend E. V. Knox, the editor of *Punch*—and, if I remember rightly, at the time of the Picasso Exhibition he inserted in *Punch* a picture showing a violent mob fighting and struggling to get into the Exhibition, and underneath was the caption: 'This is better than Art.' I leave the matter there. But I think I should unite everyone if I said that art, after all, must be judged by the degree in which it expresses human goodness and human greatness.

(Ruskin sought to deliver us from the horrors that were bequeathed to us by the Industrial Revolution and especially he wished to deliver us from the horror of the industrial town.) That deliverance has not yet taken place, but it has begun.

There was no contradiction in the various phases of Ruskin's life: none. The beauty of nature was a beauty which he wanted to see also in the cities where men live. He wanted also to see it in the lives of the people. (That is why he said that that country was greatest not which possessed

the widest boundaries but which nourished the greatest number of happy, noble, human beings. Those messages appeal to us to-day.) 50.181

When those measures of social reform now going through Parliament are all passed, there is something more to be done. We may have the most perfect arrangements for Old Age Pensions, for care in sickness, for guarding against unemployment, and all the other matters; but there remains more to do, and Ruskin has told us what that is. (It is to build a beautiful world from which war should disappear and in which people would care for the things of beauty not only in architecture or in cities but in human life) and I think that message is as urgent for us to-day as it was when Ruskin gave it.

We honour a man of princely generosity; of tireless industry: we honour a man of unrivalled vision, who places us in his debt as the greatest modern writer of prose; one who crowded his life with practical social schemes of reform in order to point the way, and has left us a literature complete in itself as offering a philosophy of life. Our reverence for him to-day is greater than ever, and in that belief I submit this toast.

2

JOHN G. WINANT

AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES

IN the course of the last week I had not the opportunity to prepare an address on John Ruskin. I come here at the request of your President simply to testify to my liking for Ruskin.

(In this world) ^{Ruskin} we value very highly the people who have a way of helping ^{him} (us) in making ourselves useful) and to me Ruskin has always been that kind of a friend. (He had a sense of law and beauty both in art and in nature. It would be hard to reproduce his sensitive understanding of Gothic architecture, and (I know no man who has written) lovelier prose in describing the flora and fauna of the Alps) (But to me his greatest gift was his recognition of the dignity of man. He resented a mechanical age that treated human beings as

digits, and he wanted to find for all men and women a useful, full life.)

I remember reading years ago that the only social legislation of our age on the Statute Books of the United States were Elizabethan poems, and deciding then that we ought to do more for those who were in employment, for those who were ageing, and for those who were dependent—particularly dependent children, and, after waiting some twenty-five years, thanks to Mr. Roosevelt and half a dozen other men, I was able to write 'Social Security' in that place and to see it put into operation, which to-day affects the lives of fifty million people in the United States.

I used to collect Ruskin first editions and I think I have now the most complete collection of first editions in the United States. Then I got interested in collecting his sketches, and I have many of those. I also have the longest of his personal letters to any private person, certainly in my country, and, amongst other things, I have in the library a self-portrait of himself which is most charming, and I have all the biographies of Ruskin.

I want to read to you, if I may, just an extract from an essay which he wrote. It is not very well known, but I read it some ten years ago as I looked out on a troubled world realizing that war lay ahead, and I thought it was a bit of prophecy: it helped me to understand those things we had to face up to if we were going to continue to be free people and were going to maintain the dignity of man. It is from *The Two Paths* and is the last part of Lecture V, *The Work of Iron, in Nature, Art and Policy*—the section called *The Sword*:

(‘The three talismans of national existence are expressed in these three short words—Labour, Law and Courage.’)

‘This last virtue we at least possess; and all that is to be alleged against us is that we do not honour it enough. I do not mean honour by acknowledgment of service, though sometimes we are slow in doing even that. But we do not honour it enough in consistent regard to the lives and souls of our soldiers. . . .

‘You may, perhaps, be surprised at my saying this; perhaps surprised at my implying that war itself can be

right, or necessary, or noble at all. (Nor do I speak of all war as necessary, nor of all war as noble. Both peace and war are noble or ignoble according to their kind and occasion.) . . .

'I cannot utter to you what I would in this matter; we all see too dimly, as yet, what our great world-duties are, to allow any of us to try to outline their enlarging shadows. But think over what I *have* said, and as you return to your quiet homes tonight, reflect that their peace was not won for you by your own hands, but by theirs who long ago jeopardized their lives for you, their children; and remember that neither this inherited peace, nor any other, can be kept, but through the same jeopardy. No peace was ever won from Fate by subterfuge or agreement; no peace is ever in store for any of us, but that which we shall win . . . over the sin that oppresses, as well as over that which corrupts . . . nor will it be by patience of others' suffering, but by the offering of your own, that you will ever draw nearer to the time when the great change shall pass upon the iron of the earth—when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks; neither shall they learn war any more.'

(There was hardly any human motivation Ruskin did not understand. There was certainly no decision ever made by him that did not rest on a moral base. You fight wars justly if they rest upon a moral base. You can only make peace if it rests upon a moral base.)

3

THE VERY REV. J. LOWE

DEAN OF CHRIST CHURCH

YOUR President's kind invitation to join you to-day, for which I am very grateful, and the unduly flattering position which I occupy, is due, I take it, not to my qualifications as a Ruskin scholar, for which I claim no compliments whatever, but solely to the fact that I do, in a sense, represent the society which was Ruskin's Alma Mater.

I found myself pitchforked, almost incidentally and unwittingly, into three contacts in fact with the legacy of Ruskin. I am afraid that so far as sheer discipleship is

concerned I would fall very far behind what your President would regard as proper. I cannot bring myself to believe—perhaps I am moving towards it as I learn more about the man, what he did, what he stood for—but I have not yet been able to bring myself to believe that Ruskin was always right. It is one of the curious paradoxes that a man who so championed beauty was, indirectly, responsible for buildings which we deplore. From my undergraduate recollections I would, on the whole, I think, have been prepared to admit that here was a man who had his great spots, his great qualities, but whose influence was somewhat dubious.

But since then, as I say, I have been moving towards a much more favourable verdict. Ruskin is very much knit into the fabric of Christ Church history. I have in my working rooms there the Matriculation Book in which his name was entered at the time in the Dean's handwriting. Whenever I go to our Senior Common Room I sit within a few feet of his picture; and to get into the Senior Common Room is a privilege perhaps more important even than to get into Hall! It is certainly restricted to a smaller number. He is very tied up with a number of great Christ Church names: Henry Acland, one of his most intimate friends; Liddell, later Dean, my predecessor in the office which I have the honour to hold; and there is a very striking thing about my society of which I feel rather proud—we have been accustomed to hearing of many great men, prophets who were not recognized in their own time and generation and had to wait for distant posterity to accord them the tribute which was their due. Ruskin was different in that respect. In fact, the whole history is rather different. Here was a man who achieved the most pre-eminent position at Oxford, where he became the art dictator of the country in quite early life, and then perhaps for a period rather faded out, and it is perhaps only now that we are beginning to come into the third stage when there is a more discriminating appreciation of those things which are good and inspiring in his words and influence—and they are enormous and important and are beginning once more to be appreciated at their true worth. And what is a source of gratification to me and to my colleagues (though it is not to our credit but to that of

our forebears) is that the supreme honour which Christ Church can bestow upon any of its sons was given to Ruskin at a very early point. When he was only thirty-nine years of age, in 1858, Christ Church did offer him an Honorary Studentship. That is, perhaps, not a very big thing in the world at large, but it is the best that we can do. It is a fairly narrowly restricted honour, presented by Statute to a small handful, and it is some satisfaction to us, I think, that already, at that point in the storm of controversy which was raging, members of the Society had the percipience to recognize the outstanding merit of this son of theirs and to give him their highest honour at that rather unusually early age. There is no parallel to it so far as I know. In Elizabethan times a certain Toby Matthew was made Dean of Christ Church in his early thirties, but that was a royal appointment and did not depend on the Society itself. By some curious accident I was myself made Dean of Christ Church at the age of forty; but again that is not really a parallel. I cannot think—and I did glance through the lists—of anyone who was given this honour of an Honorary Studentship at anything like so early an age as Ruskin.

And that is one of the reasons—the way in which he is playing a part in the tradition of Christ Church—for which I am glad to be with you and support this toast.

Another is this: I have been having a great deal to do with a curious party which we call the Delegacy for Extra-Mural Studies, an Oxford Committee which supervises the attempts which the University makes to spread the sort of thing for which it stands beyond its legal bounds of habitation—a fairly big and important work. The Delegacy has contacts and interests in a good many parts of the country. It was, I am glad to think, one of the first to take on, on a large scale, this work of adult education in post-war co-operation with the Workers' Education Association, and one could mention many names in that connexion, the most notable being the Master of Balliol. I have been acting under him in looking after the work of that Delegacy the last three or four years, and you cannot do that without coming, at every point, upon the traces of Ruskin's work and influence. They are numerous.

And now I have been brought quite recently into a third point of contact with the memory of Ruskin. This will not be news to you entirely, I fancy, because at any rate the bare bones of the matter have already appeared in the public press, and it would have been fitting that still more should have been said about it on this occasion, but your President, I imagine, felt inhibited from referring to it for very good and obvious reasons: Ruskin's last resting-place and the house and property on which he lavished so much care and affection in his later years, Brantwood, on Coniston Water, has just recently, through the very remarkable generosity of your President, been presented to the University of Oxford for a number of purposes which would have had the whole-hearted approbation of John Ruskin himself. I have been lucky enough, partly through my connexion with the Extra-Mural Delegacy, to be in on the negotiations from the start, and it is an open secret that they were attended with some difficulty. At first when this rather staggering offer was sprung on the University there was a little doubt as to just what should be done with it and whether it was really quite the University's business to take on this apparently rather remote interest. But, through a number of us who appreciated the possibilities, all these difficulties have been smoothed out, and the University has now accepted this property and plans are going forward—not very fast, but I think surely—to make a worthy use of it.

It is a very remarkable spot. I was able to go up there last year and look it over with a Committee from the University which was investigating some of the practical details; and it does illustrate and represent a great many of the most characteristic interests and enthusiasms of Ruskin. A very beautiful site. What we plan to do is to make it, in the first instance, a Ruskin Museum in which a great many of his personal belongings, his drawings and sketches, some of the things he liked and treasured most, will be preserved for ever, openly accessible to all who are interested and wish to visit and look at them; and partly a place to which members of the University, both senior and junior, can go for rest and recreation and, more particularly, for carrying on that great University institution which has been threatening to die out

—the reading party, in the way of which many difficulties have been placed in recent years, partly because of expense and of competing attractions. We hope that this custom will be practised very largely by all students, whereby those in earnest, who mean business, will go off in one of the vacations, with or without a tutor, and take the opportunity, while they are living in this attractive and beautiful spot, to do a certain amount of serious work. The short eight weeks of term are a strenuous and hectic time, and the only time in which you can digest and assimilate the material to which you have been exposed in the short period of term are these vacation weeks when there is time to read, to think, and to talk freely in a small and intimate group; and we hope that Brantwood will see a succession of reading parties from various Colleges, some of whom—my own, I am glad to say, among them—are helping during the transitional period to make the venture possible financially in regard to upkeep. So we hope to see a succession of reading parties going up there, living in this extraordinarily delightful spot, able to keep in touch with all the best that represents what Ruskin stood for and combining, as he would have wished, in very fruitful and fertile combination, beautiful surroundings, hills, roads, water and the rest, together with opportunities for really serious thinking, working, and conference, for which equally he stood.

It has just barely begun yet; we are now in process of looking for a warden who will run the place. There are many possibilities in front of it, we hope, and it is almost settled that on one corner of the estate we shall be able to co-operate with the Education Committee of the Lancashire County Council who propose, in collaboration with the Extra-Mural Delegacy, to set up an Adult Residential College, one of the things that are going to be most needed in the new educational layout of this country. The members of that College will benefit very much also by their proximity to and contact with the memory and relics of Ruskin. It is a venture of great promise from which we are hoping for great things.

And in that way, and in a discriminating and yet appreciative realization of the permanently abiding things about

Ruskin's message, we can all join together in supporting this tribute.

4

SIR ARTHUR SALTER, M.P.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

I AM extremely glad for several reasons to have an opportunity of adding a few words to what has been said; first of all because, taking part as I did yesterday in the debate on the latest Insurance Bill, I remember vividly the time thirty-four years ago when you and I, Mr. President, were associated as two private secretaries with the Minister in charge of the Insurance Act of that time.

You referred to John Ruskin being the author of the social reform measures of this century. (He was certainly the prophet and inspiration; the one who sowed the seed for the harvest which we have been reaping now) this last thirty years.

I am very glad indeed that the Dean referred to the beneficent and magnificent gift to Oxford University and told us to what good use the University is proposing to put that gift of Brantwood.

In looking back after all these years, it is interesting to realize the difference in our valuation of what was most valuable in the heritage we have from Ruskin from the kind of valuation that would have been made at the time by his contemporaries. I agree with the Dean that at Oxford we do not feel chiefly indebted to John Ruskin for his influence upon the architecture of that city! He referred to the Meadow buildings of Christ Church, and I think one might have said the same thing about the Museum at Oxford. Nor, in his actual advice as to what was good and bad in contemporary art, have succeeding generations always confirmed his views. His famous remark about Whistler flinging a paint-brush into the face of the British public has made us ever since, I think, very cautious—perhaps a little over-cautious—in reacting against what seems to us at the time in modern art crankish and absurd; for we must always remember that if it is indeed true that some of those who seemed the cranks of

the time have been shown afterwards to be great artists, we tend to forget that there are a number of other people quite rightly thought to be cranks at the time and who have disappeared in the interval into obscurity.

What we do feel, I think, in retrospect, is that we owe enormously more than his contemporaries ever thought we should to Ruskin as an inspiration of the present period of social reform, and for his anticipation of much of modern economics as against what was then regarded as the orthodoxy of the times. And we owe a great deal in that respect, not so much, indeed, to his influence on art, but to the inspiration he gave to people at any rate to take interest in the beauty about them; and, not least, of course, his own actual personal artistic legacy of what he produced himself. But perhaps even more do we owe for what he produced in the sphere of literature. I am one of those who think that his prose is imperishable in its beauty, and I am extremely glad to see here Mrs. Nevinson, because I well know how H. W. Nevinson, in my view one of the masters of English in his day as Ruskin was in his, passionately admired John Ruskin. We have that imperishable heritage of his in his English prose; we also have, in Oxford particularly, the memory of a great and inspiring personality. I suppose there has never been anybody at Oxford who, at his lectures, left such an enduring and striking memory of personality as John Ruskin.

I think we have something even to learn from the cases where he did not succeed; I refer to his paint-brush comment about Whistler, but there is one other little incident I would mention. I was not only educated at Oxford, I was born there, and I remember as a small boy being taken by my father to that Hinksey Road which had been built by Oxford undergraduates under Ruskin's influence, and my father there gave me one of the lessons which I have never forgotten. 'Look at this road,' he said. 'It is a monument of success and a warning of failure. This road was built by undergraduates whom John Ruskin persuaded to leave their sports and come out with their picks and make a road—and a man who could do that with undergraduates could do anything with his fellow men. You see what personal influence

can be. Oh yes, there is the road they made; and you see it is the worst road anywhere round Oxford. You don't only want good ideals, but you want to know how to carry them into practice.' We have learned from his failures as well as the wider and richer spheres of his successes, and his legacy is, as I said, an artistic appreciation, a social interest, and his imperishable prose.

5

CAPTAIN H. BEAUMONT, M.P.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES

I HAVE just whispered to Lord Samuel on my left that I had to make a hurried exit to be at the House of Commons to try to subdue very many people who may want to speak! It is true I have recently been honoured by being given what sometimes seems a rather exalted position in the House of Commons, but thereby I am precluded from speaking, and the only joy I have, on the other hand, is that in my office I can also exercise the power of preventing other people from speaking as well.

I am very delighted and honoured to be allowed to be here this afternoon. I have cudgelled my brains as to why I should have been invited, apart from the fact that, many years ago, Mr. Howard Whitehouse may remember I had some association with him when he was a Member of Parliament in those years, long, long ago. But perhaps I have one claim which no other member of this company has with regard to John Ruskin—I don't think even Mr. Whitehouse is up to this: I believe I happen to be the only Ruskin College student here. Many years ago I was privileged to be a member of Ruskin College, and the American Ambassador may be interested to know that Ruskin College was due largely in its initiation to the generosity of two American citizens, Mr. and Mrs. Vrooman, who made it possible for Ruskin College to be started at Oxford. I was one of those poor people who unfortunately could not spend the time at Oxford, but I made up my mind I would go if I could and, thanks to the Spartan life and economical living of Ruskin

College, I was able to enjoy nearly two years there. There I did make contacts with John Ruskin's teaching, and I am, along with Mr. Whitehouse, convinced of this: that that influence has been widely felt and that teaching which Ruskin gave to us in his beautiful prose and all his works is a power for good and an incitement to those people who desire to better the conditions of the people of this world.

I want to thank Mr. Whitehouse for his kindness in inviting me here, and may I express the hope that the spirit of John Ruskin will last and will inspire mankind and in particular the two great countries, ours and that of America, to higher deeds and to creating a nobler existence for man.

6

E. V. KNOX

I THINK I have less claim than anybody here to speak on this subject, apart from a reference that has already been made to the paper I represent. I believe it is a fact that Ruskin himself did mention *Punch* with extreme favour at one time, but I am not quite sure why, because I don't think the paper ever represented the highest ideals in art or even in the way of social works. But I think that Ruskin was very much pleased by the drawings of Leech.

I have one or two points of interest in the matter on which I should like information myself, and they are not entirely serious, but not in the least frivolous. I would rather like to know, for instance, how far the ideals of a better standard of living and increase in social security go with increase of culture and appreciation of the arts. I should very much like to know whether the appreciation of art or culture goes any wider or deeper now in proportion than it did when Ruskin was speaking and teaching.

As far as the mistakes which Ruskin is said to have made are concerned—I was certain that the paint-brush comment would come up, as it did!—I think it is probably fairly safe to say that most people, when they are getting rather older, are a little unsafe in their estimates of newer movements in art; and perhaps it is just as well that they should be. I think

when people getting older begin to think everything new is good, and the madder the better, then they are in danger of going entirely wrong, and it is probably better for people to stop at some point in their lives and say: 'We prefer the older things and will not go any farther.' That, I think, Ruskin did. After all, he went up as far as Turner and would not go a step farther. Perhaps it is just as well. There were plenty of people to go on.

THE PRESIDENT

I now ask you to drink the toast of the immortal memory of John Ruskin.

(The toast was drunk with enthusiasm.)

*R. W. C.
24.1.52
7*

THE RIGHT HON. LORD SAMUEL, P.C.

THE members and friends of the Ruskin Society are exceedingly grateful to Mr. Winant for his kindness in coming here to-day to take part in these proceedings and to address us. It is just five years since he became the Ambassador of the United States in London. In all that time he has been in private life the friend of very many and in public life the friend of all. He has been to this country a very good friend, sympathetic, understanding, and, no doubt, when necessary, forbearing. His political ideals have been expressed by him to-day in his quotation from Ruskin and the comments he made upon it, namely that morality must be the basis of all public life.

(The whole of Ruskin's teaching was one long, vehement, passionate protest against the divorce of economics and politics from ethics, and nowhere was that divorce greater than in the sphere of diplomacy, where the anti-moral conceptions of Machiavelli long retained a hold upon the professional diplomats) creating what Lord Acton called 'an atmosphere of accredited mendacity'. But now that the age of democracy has come, and Ambassadors represent not kings but peoples, there is arising a new spirit, and we can

see now, particularly exemplified in the ideals, if not always in the practice, of the United Nations, that the qualities of honesty, straightforwardness, goodwill, and courtesy could prevail in the relations between nations as fully as they ought to prevail in the relations between individuals. I am sure Ruskin would have rejoiced to think, if he had been alive to-day, that the teaching which he so long promulgated is being applied in practice by the Ambassador.

We are grateful to Mr. Winant for his presence here to-day and for all his work for international goodwill, and particularly for what is of supreme and fundamental importance to the whole world, the closest understanding between the British Commonwealth and the United States. I don't think that Ruskin himself ever went to America. If he were to go there to-day no doubt he would have mixed feelings, as he would if he came back to the England of to-day. Superficially he would find very much to criticize. I always forget whether it was Ruskin or Carlyle who said that the only living art in England to-day is bill-sticking, and the prominence of that art, both in this country and in the United States, would, no doubt, affect him disagreeably. But he would find in the United States of to-day a very remarkable advance in many of the finest elements of well-being. It is now more than fifty years, nearly sixty, since I paid my first visit of several to the United States, and on my last visit I noticed particularly, and commented upon it at the time, that one of the greatest differences between the United States of the present day and the United States of 1888, which was the year of my first visit, having just left school and not yet gone to Oxford, one of the greatest differences is that, while then one was struck—even the boy could not fail to be somewhat struck—by a certain crudity in American life, there was still the roughness of a pioneer country, to-day you find a very remarkable advance in all cultural elements. The truly magnificent picture galleries and museums are outstanding in the world, and in architecture also one finds a great school of new architects both for domestic work and public work, and they have made, in recent years, Washington unquestionably the noblest modern city in the world. There is also, thanks to the very widespread university

education now in the United States, far exceeding anything we have here in numbers of students and graduates, a very large fraction of the population now which has had an education up to the age of about twenty or even more, both men and women, and which represents a public opinion ready to welcome and to appreciate the really good things; and it is that which is of supreme importance; you cannot get great art or great literature among a nation the mass of whose people is unacquainted with the virtues of good art and good literature. As Emerson wrote: 'It is the good reader makes the good book.' Unless you have an audience waiting of good readers, you won't get good books. And now in America, and I think we may say here also, there is an age of greater democracy, also an age of more widespread culture, and it is of supreme importance in the modern world to secure that, while all the good things of life should be shared among the commonalty, at the same time our standards of well-being, our standards of values, should not be lowered or coarsened, to quote the words of Matthew Arnold.

That was the preaching of Ruskin, and, in so far as we achieve this purpose, we shall be honouring his memory and obeying his behests.

I have very much pleasure in proposing the health of Mr. Winant, the Ambassador, and telling him how much we appreciate his speech and presence to-day.

(The toast was drunk with enthusiasm.)

MR. WINANT

Mr. President, I just rise to thank you for your great hospitality and to thank you in particular for your great generosity which has been appreciated by every lover of Ruskin; and I would also thank Lord Samuel, who has so kindly proposed this toast.

SIR ALAN HERBERT, M.P.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

My Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen: I have been charged with the very welcome task of proposing the health of our President. I do that with the more sincerity in that he is my landlord, the owner of the little house in which I have studied and worked beside the river for thirty years! And when I hear all this talk about his giving away houses to the University, I have some qualms that I may wake up one morning and find he has presented 13 Hammersmith Terrace to Cambridge University, and who knows whether Cambridge University will find me an acceptable tenant? Therefore, while very glad to join with my colleagues the Dean of Christ Church and Sir Arthur Salter in thanking our President, I have a few qualms.

Speaking of Sir Arthur—I am glad he has gone because I shan't bore him by telling a story which I have told often before. When he joined me in the representation of Oxford University, a Dean of the Church of England said, unchristianly and inaccurately, that Oxford was now represented by a boat-builder and a buffoon—I presume I am the boat-builder.

I am very proud to have been a good boat-builder, and so was John Ruskin and so must Howard Whitehouse be of all those fine boys of his at Bembridge who make very good boats, as I have seen.

Talking of mistakes, I suppose we all looked up at least one quotation in the *Dictionary of Quotations* this morning. One I liked very much was where Ruskin said {‘I suppose there are few of us who would not gaze for a long time upon a book before he would be ready to pay the price for it which he would be willing to pay for a large turbot.’} There is no mistake there, in these days, I fear!

But I do want to ask you to charge your glasses and to drink the health of the President, who, not only in a practical way, in that fine school which he runs (I hope you have all seen it; I think there are some of his pupils here), has really followed the gospel and teaching of John Ruskin, but by the

way in which he inspires and leads this society, has kept and will keep, as long as he is spared to us, undiminished and ablaze, the torch of which not only this country but all English-speakers may well be proud.

9

J. HOWARD WHITEHOUSE

I CAN only say that I am very deeply touched by the kind words in which Sir Alan Herbert has moved this toast, and by the most kind references which have been made by the Dean of Christ Church, Sir Arthur Salter, and others. I value these words very much indeed, more than I can say. I can only ask you to accept these faltering words in assuring you that I shall never forget them and that I shall always treasure the memory of this meeting.

I have still one or two things to say: Mr. Adams, an old member of the Ruskin Society and a very devoted Ruskinian, acquired, many years ago, at the sale of some of the personal property of Ruskin (it was a tragedy that the belongings of Ruskin were sold by people not very sympathetic to his teaching) the Certificates given to John Ruskin at Christ Church recording his various scholastic achievements. They are here, and Mr. Adams desires me to state that he would like me to present them to the University of Oxford or to Christ Church. I therefore have the utmost pleasure on behalf of the donor in handing these documents, of such singular interest, to the Dean of Christ Church. In doing so I record the interesting fact that one of them is signed by a Robert Lowe. I hope it may prove to be an ancestor of the Dean who has honoured us with his presence to-day.

10

THE DEAN OF CHRIST CHURCH

It is just possible that it may be. I must investigate it. In any case, I do accept with very warm pleasure and satisfaction these documents which are of considerable historic interest: a Certificate of Ruskin's appearance before the Vice-Chancellor, his Subscription to the Articles, and taking the Oath of Obedience to the University, his Matriculation, his Sponsor-

ing Certificate, and finally his Public Examination in Greats. They will be put with such other Ruskin documents as we have already at Christ Church and kept with due care, and we shall be very glad indeed to preserve them.

THE PRESIDENT

I WANT to ask you to remain and listen to a short address from Mr. Noel Rooke. May I state, if it is not already known, that Mr. Noel Rooke is the son of the late T. M. Rooke, almost the lifelong friend of Ruskin. He went constantly abroad and made wonderful records of buildings and scenes of natural beauty. Mr. Noel Rooke is himself a beautiful creative worker.

I I

NOEL ROOKE

THOUGH I have known quite a number of people who had known Ruskin, I think the closest contact I have felt with him was through somebody who had hardly met him once—W. R. Lethaby, the architect, and former surveyor of Westminster Abbey. Now, Lethaby had this to say about Ruskin. Lethaby, I should explain, was a man of very wide interests, very wide perceptions. As an architect, forty-five years ago, I heard him predict the rise of the Functionalist Movement and others twenty-five years before they happened. He looked upon that period of architecture as absolutely inevitable and absolutely essential, to get away from the remains of the sham styles. He felt that all decoration had to be ground down into the dust and we had to go through a period of absolutely plain walls before we could get a fresh start. He was an extreme humanitarian, and he saw we had to pass through that phase. This is what he used to say about Ruskin: Ruskin invented modern thinking, not *current* thinking, *modern* thinking, which has not yet reached any political party in any country in the world, and it is this: man can only be civilized by means of his work, not by means of the way he spends his leisure.

A lot of Lethaby's speaking and writing was based on an elucidation of that.

I feel it is even more important now to say that than it was ten years ago. Ten years ago a great number of people would have disputed it. I think it is difficult to dispute it now. We have already seen one apparently civilized country go entirely sour, like a piece of food that has gone bad in the larder, and I think there is still a possibility of our most civilized countries also going thoroughly wrong unless we can meet that difficulty—and there is no sign of it being done yet, as far as I can see. All the present sets of plans for improving the world ignore that side of Ruskin's teaching. Somehow we have got to try to get round that corner.

I 2

SIR GEOFFREY MANDER

I HAVE pleasure in introducing my guest here to-day, Professor Hitchcock of the United States, to whom I was talking last night and happened to mention casually that this Luncheon was taking place. As an enthusiast of the ideas of Ruskin he was so tremendously interested that I was bold enough to ask the President if it would be possible to find a place for him at this table.

I 3

PROFESSOR HITCHCOCK

I CANNOT add much to what Mr. Winant has said as to what Ruskin means to us in America, but I can perhaps add a fact or two. I really believe, on the basis of certain investigations I made several years ago, that Ruskin was the leading American architectural author; more editions of his works were published in America—I regret to say piratically!—than of any American architectural author. Indeed, I think that in the 'fifties, when his influence was debatable here, he was already with us being more widely quoted in preference to any other architectural authority.

I am so fortunate as to have been able to profit by some developments at Harvard University carried out by Charles Eliot Norton under the influence of his great friend Ruskin. I was brought up there with the Medievalist tradition which,

in America, goes back from Norton to Ruskin. Yet my own interests lie far more in the modern world, as did Ruskin's in a sense; for Ruskin was the great interpreter of the Middle Ages, yet his interpretation was never that of one who wished somehow to escape into the Middle Ages. It was rather that of one who wished to push forward into the modern world.

My neighbour here has mentioned the name of Lethaby. That links, to some extent, Ruskin with the present. He has also mentioned the extent to which much of what appears to us modern architecture in the middle of the twentieth century can be traced back through links such as Lethaby, and Morris, to the thought of Ruskin. Ruskin himself abjured in his later life the vulgarization of his influence, and he repudiated responsibility for much that was done. Even had there been no Ruskin, there would have been the unfortunate side of the Gothic Revival. But there was another side to the Gothic Revival in which Ruskin gives us a pattern of thinking, a pattern of thought about art and architecture which has continued into the present day, and which makes it possible, I think, even to look at these buildings to which the Dean objects with a certain curiosity; because the Museum at least represents an attempt such as the twentieth century even has not made to combine the use of new materials, of glass and iron, with all the full richness which Ruskin appreciated in the past. Now, as my neighbour said in referring to Lethaby, we have only revived the honest use of materials by losing a lot of the richness which Ruskin's age prematurely tried to carry over and got lost because of their incapacity quite to think through the implications of the new materials. We have thought through these implications as Ruskin taught us to do. We still have to enrich our architecture again as he would have wished us to do.

J. HOWARD WHITEHOUSE

I AM sure we are all very much obliged to our visitor for those few words, which are so helpful in enabling us to understand some aspects of the influence of Ruskin in America.

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