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JOHN RUSKIN.

There are two thin volumes—thin as to the mere material substance, I mean—which every young girl would be the better for reading; which ought to have a handy place in her chosen, very own library. Both are by the author whose name stands above; and their titles are "Letters to Young Girls," and "Sesame and Lilies." The first explains itself; the other provokes the question, "What is it?" or "What does it mean?"

His titles are mostly odd, and as enigmatical and picturesque as they are odd; but they always have a hidden meaning. Ruskin is one of the sincerest writers living; and if he does go far out of the way for one, you may be sure that he has a purpose in so doing, and will make it clear. But more about this by-and-by. The man first, his words and titles afterwards.

The place of his birth was London; the date February 8, 1819. He seems to have been a solitary little lad, and was brought up in rather a rigid way. He had Walter Scott's novels and Pope's translation of the "Iliad" for his only reading on week days; and on Sunday he had "Robinson Crusoe" and "Pilgrim's Progress," and his mother made him learn long chapters in the Bible by heart, and read it "straight through, aloud, hard names and all, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, about once a year." She gave him his daily lesson, but never more to learn at a time than she knew he could do, and he was kept in until it was done, whether Bible or Latin grammar. From the time he could read he was required to be persevering and thorough, and her method made him so conscientious that he said he never thought of doing anything behind her back that he would not have done before her face. It was a good beginning.

So his masters were Scott and Homer, therefore he had to look up. But the kind of writing which formed his style was the strong, vital Saxon of the Bible. He said he owed much of his general power of taking pains and the best part of his taste in literature to that Scripture discipline, "patient, accurate and resolute," and (here is a hint for you.)

once knowing 32nd of Deuteronomy, the 119th Psalm, the 15th of 1st Corinthians, the Sermon on the Mount, and most of the Apocalypse every syllable by heart, and having always a way of thinking with myself what words meant, it was not possible for me even in the foolishness of youth to write entirely superficial or formal English.

His father was a wine-merchant, but he had such a rare love for pictures and rare discernment of what was true art that he ought instead to have been a painter. He used to hire a post-chaise for two months

in the summer, and, taking his wife and this only son with him, go the round of his country customers, always planning so as to stop over night at some town near a nobleman's house where there was a fine picture gallery that he could visit. The child, four or five years old when these outings began, had a seat on "a little bracket in front," and so, "at a jog-trot pace, he saw all of the high roads and most of the cross ones of England and Wales, and great part of lowland Scotland."

After years of this kind of education of his eyes, he went up to Oxford, where at

are "Seven Lamps of Architecture" and "The Stones of Venice."

Never before was architecture shown on paper in such a fascinating way. His pages are pictures, and his mode is as original as it is charming. These lamps are "the Spirits of Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience," and there are great principles which affect human conduct underlying what he says. To know how to make use of them one must read for one's self, and see what the truths are, and with what splendor of language he clothes them.

Most of his lectures and notes are on art

second is to be faithful. The third is to be loving and generous. And because of all these characters lastly it is cheerful.

A series for the working classes is "Fors Clavigera"; which I refer to especially, because it was in these letters with the strange title which it takes more than one page to explain, that he proposed to form the society which now exists near Sheffield, called "St. George's Guild." He has given a great part of his money to it, and fitted up a free museum and library, and his purpose by means of it is to have the poorer people live sweet and noble lives. They are to help others when they can, "seek to avenge no injury, strive to produce what is beautiful in form and to become what is lovely in character."

The girls to spin, weave, and sew, and at a proper age to cook all ordinary food exquisitely; the youth of both sexes to be disciplined daily in the strictest practice of vocal music; and for morality, to be taught gentleness to all brute creatures—finished courtesy to each other—to speak truth with rigid care, and to obey orders with the precision of soldiers. Then as they grow older, they are to learn the natural history of the place they live in—to know Latin, boys and girls both—and the history of five cities: Athens, Rome, Venice, Florence and London.

Of course this is not all. Those cities are named that they shall learn "what has been beautifully and bravely done"—something about heroic deeds and art.

The training of girls has an important place in Mr. Ruskin's writings. "To the real little housewives" whom he loves he dedicated, as a Christmas offering, his book, "The Ethics of the Dust," mostly about crystals, but having one chapter on home virtues. He has lofty ideals for girls—will they live up to them? He says:

Girls should be like daisies; nice and white, with an edge of red if you look close; making the ground bright where they are; knowing simply and quietly that they do it, and are meant to do it, and that it would be very wrong if they did not do it.

About cooking:

It means the knowledge of Medea and of Circe, and of Calypso and of Helen, and of Rebekah; and of the Queen of Sheba. It means the knowledge of all herbs and fruits, and balms and spices, and of all that is healing and sweet in fields and groves, and savory in meats; it means carefulness, and inventiveness, and watchfulness, and willingness, and readiness of appliance; it means the economy of your great-grandmothers, and the science of modern chemists; it means much tasting and no wasting; it means English thoroughness and French art and Arabian hospitality; and it means, in fine, that you are to be perfectly and always 'ladies'—'loaf-givers,' and, as you are to see, imperatively, that everybody has something pretty to put on, so you are to see, yet more imperatively, that everybody has something good to eat.

To go back now to the two books named



JOHN RUSKIN.

twenty-one he won a prize for a poem; at that period he wrote some very attractive poetry, but ceased from it before he was thirty. In 1843, the name John Ruskin became suddenly known far and wide, and so well-known that nobody could forget it, through a volume called "Modern Painters." Five with that title were eventually published, although seventeen years passed between the first and last of the series. This is the work on which some critics claim that his reputation rests; but those which are of greater interest to the general readers

and architecture; he has also written as well as done a great deal for working men. The book entitled "The Crown of Wild Olive" abounds with strong advice coming straight home to everybody. He always speaks for good work by whomsoever done, and "work is only done well when it is done with a will." It is in this volume that he gives his idea of what a child should be.

The first character of right childhood is that it is Modest. . . . And it is always asking questions and wanting to know more. The

1886
M. Pozzer
GALLION QUE
ALBERT