

Among the Great Writers

From Ruskin.

"If in our moments of utter idleness and insipidity we turn to the sky as a last resource, which of its phenomena do we speak of? One says it has been wet, and another it has been windy, and another it has been warm. Who, among the whole chattering crowd, can tell me of the forms and the precipices of the chain of tall white mountains that girded the horizon at noon yesterday? Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the South, and smote upon their summits until they melted and mouldered away in a dust of blue rain? Who saw the dance of the dead clouds when the sunlight left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it like withered leaves? All has passed, unregretted as unseen; or, if the apathy be ever shaken off, even for an instant, it is only by what is gross, or what is extraordinary; and yet it is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, not in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind, that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still, small voice."—Modern Painters, Vol. I.

"All the lectures, and teachings, and prizes, and principles of art in the world, are of no use, so long as you don't surround your men with happy influences and beautiful things. It is impossible for them to have right ideas about color unless they see the lovely colors of Nature unspoiled; impossible for them to supply beautiful incident and action in their ornament, unless they see beautiful incident and action in the world about them. Inform their minds, refine their habits, and you form and refine their designs; but keep them illiterate, uncomfortable, and in the midst of unbeautiful things, and whatever they do will still be spurious, vulgar, and valueless."—From The Two Paths.

"In looking back from the ridges of the Hill Difficulty in my own past life, and in all the vision that has been given me of the wanderings in the ways of others—this, of all principles, has become to me surest—that the first virtue to be required of man is frankness of heart and lip."—On the Old Road.

"It may be proved, with much certainty, that God intends no man to live in this world without working, but it seems to me no less evident that He intends every man to be happy in his work. It is written, 'In the sweat of thy brow,' but it was never written, 'In the breaking of thy heart,' thou shalt eat bread. . . . Now, in order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed. They must be fit for it. They must not do too much of it, and they must have a sense of success in it, that so much work has been done well and fruitfully, whatever the world may say or think about it."—Pre-Raphaelitism.

"So much pains you shall take—so much time you shall wait; that is the law. Understand it, honor it, with peace of heart accept the pain and attend the hours; and as the

husbandman in his waiting you shall see, first the blade, then the ear, and then the laughing of the valleys."—Cestus of Aglaia.

"For all noble things the time is long and the way rude."

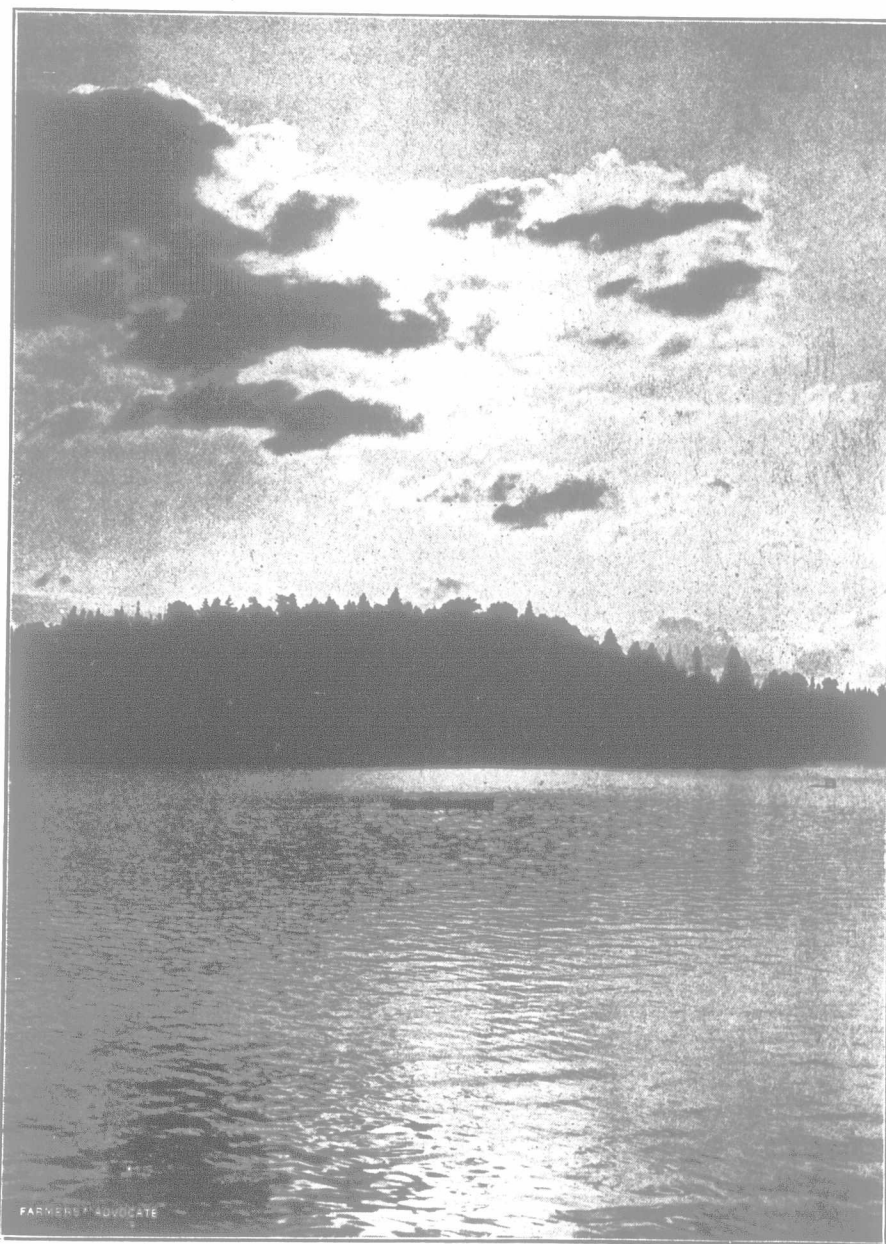
"I suppose few men now living have so earnestly felt—none certainly have so earnestly declared—that the beauty of Nature is the blesseddest and most necessary of lessons for men; and that all other efforts in education are futile till you have taught your people to love fields, birds, and flowers. Come, then, my benevolent friends, join with me in that teaching."—On the Old Road.

FROM "STONES OF VENICE."

"We are always in these days endeavoring to separate the two; we want one man to be always thinking, and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman and the other an operative; whereas, the workman ought often to be thinking,

that we see, or do, we are to desire perfection, and strive for it, we are, nevertheless, not to set the meaner thing, in its narrow accomplishment, above the nobler thing, in its mighty progress; not to esteem smooth minuteness above shattered majesty; not to prefer mean victory to honorable defeat; not to lower the level of our aim that we may more surely enjoy the complacency of success. But, above all, in our dealings with the souls of other men, we are to take care how we check, by severe requirement or narrow caution, efforts which might otherwise lead to a noble issue; and, still more, how we withhold our admiration from great excellences, because they are mingled with rough faults."

"I believe that stars, and boughs, and leaves, and bright colors, are everlastingly lovely, and to be by all men beloved."



Sunrise in Northern Ontario.

FROM "FORS CLAVIGERA."

"The first condition of education is being put to wholesome and useful work."

"He asks the workmen: (1) 'To do your own work well, whether it be for life or death. (2) To help other people at theirs, when you can, and seek to avenge no injury. (3) To be sure you can obey good laws before you seek to alter bad ones.'"

"Mind your own business with

your absolute heart and soul, but see that it is a good business first, that it is corn and sweet peas you are producing—not gunpowder and arsenic."

"Well, my friends, the final result of the education I want you to give your children will be, in a few words, this: They will know what it is to see the sky. They will know what it is to breathe it. And they will know, best of all, what it is to be have under it as in the presence of a Father who is in heaven."

"A day will come when we shall have men resolute to do good work, and capable of reading and thinking while they rest."

He thinks a time will come when vast estates must be broken up. "Neither British Constitution nor British law, though it blanch every acre with an acre of parchment, sealed with as many seals as the meadow had buttercups, can keep your landlordship safe henceforward for an hour. You will have to fight for them, as your fathers did, if you mean to keep them."

His ideal for life: "Agricultural life, with as much refinement as I can enforce in it."

"Contentment is the main matter; you may enjoy to any extent, but if you are discontented, your life will be poisoned."

FROM "UNTO THIS LAST."

"So long as there are cold and nakedness in the land around you, so long there can be no question at all but that splendor of dress is a crime."

"Is it not wonderful that, while we should be utterly ashamed to use a superiority of body in order to thrust our weaker companions aside from some place of advantage, we unhesitatingly use our superiorities of mind to thrust them back from whatever good that strength of mind can attain."

"I believe that no Christian nation has any business to see one of its members in distress, without helping him, though at the same time, perhaps, punishing him; help, of course, in nine cases out of ten, meaning guidance, much more than gift."

"It would be far better that members of Parliament should be able to plow straight and make a horseshoe, than only to feather oars neatly or point their toes prettily in stirrups."

The present competitive system of the world he looks upon as creating "a vast and disorganized mob, scrambling each for what he can get, trampling down its children and old men in the mire, and doing what work it finds must be done with any irregular squad of laborers it can bribe or inveigle together, and afterwards scatter to starvation."

"It follows from the natural limitation of supply that the accumulation of property. . . in large masses at one point, or in one person's hands, commonly involves, more or less, the scarcity of it at another point and in other persons' hands. Therefore, the modes of its accumulation and distribution need to be in some degree regulated by law and by national treaties, in order to secure justice to all men."