

## CHAPTER I

### THE LAMP OF SACRIFICE

§ 1. ARCHITECTURE is the art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by man, for whatsoever uses, that the sight of them may contribute to his mental health, power, and pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

APHORISM  
4.

It is very necessary, in the outset of all inquiry, to distinguish carefully between Architecture and Building.\*

*All architecture proposes an effect on the human mind, not merely a service to the human frame.<sup>2</sup>*

To build,—literally, to confirm,<sup>3</sup>—is by common understanding to put together and adjust the several pieces of any edifice or receptacle of a considerable

\* This distinction is a little stiff and awkward in terms, but not in thought. And it is perfectly accurate, though stiff, even in terms. It is the addition of

<sup>1</sup> [In the MS. these words read first “health, strength, and pleasure;” then “health, happiness, and pleasure,” and finally as in the text. A draft of another opening to this chapter is also among the MS., and runs as follows:—

“Architecture is that art which taking up, and admitting as conditions of her working, the necessities and uses of the building, makes it also agreeable to the eye, or venerable, or honourable by the addition of certain useless characters on such principles as I am about to endeavour to develope.

“Thus : in devotional buildings; it is not the art of architecture which fits them to receive, and entertain with comfort, a certain required number of persons engaged in religious offices. That is the ecclesiastical builder’s business, not the Architect’s. Though often the first and most essential requirement, it is not the Act of architecture which accomplishes it. It is no more Architecture that builds a convenient church than it is architecture which builds a comfortable carriage, or a safe sailing ship. One receptacle is small and another large, one is of stone and of wood, one stands and another floats—accidental differences these of no consequence whatsoever as regards the idea of Art,—they are all receptacles for people : which must be built on certain scientific principles, and the persons who build them are builders : church builders, coach builders, or ship builders—very able men, sometimes very necessarily able, if they are to build well : much more able than many architects—but not therefore to be called by a wrong name. So also in military works. . . .”]

<sup>2</sup> [The aphorism in the text, in black-letter in the 1880 edition, is “Architecture is the art . . . power, and pleasure.” Ruskin in *The Poetry of Architecture*, written eleven years before, had already made this distinction clear : see Vol. I. p. 5.]

<sup>3</sup> [The etymology here suggested seems to make some confusion between the Old English word “build,” of which the fundamental senses are “to construct a dwelling,” “to take up one’s abode,” and the Latin synonyms.]

size. Thus we have church building, house building, ship building, and coach building. That one edifice stands, another floats, and another is suspended on iron springs, makes no difference in the nature of the art, if so it may be called, of building or edification. The persons who profess that art, are severally builders, ecclesiastical, naval, or of whatever other name their work may justify: but building does not become architecture merely by the stability of what it erects; and it is no more architecture which raises a church, or which fits it to receive and contain with comfort a required number of persons occupied in certain religious offices, than it is architecture which makes a carriage commodious, or a ship swift. I do not, of course, mean that the word is not often, or even may not be legitimately, applied in such a sense (as we speak of naval architecture); but in that sense architecture ceases to be one of the fine arts, and it is therefore better not to run the risk, by loose nomenclature, of the confusion which would arise, and has often arisen, from extending principles which belong altogether to building, into the sphere of architecture proper.

Let us, therefore, at once confine the name to that art which, taking up and admitting, as conditions of its working, the necessities and common uses of the building, impresses on its form certain characters venerable or beautiful, but otherwise unnecessary. Thus, I suppose, no one would call the laws architectural which determine the height of a breastwork or the position of a bastion. But if to the stone facing of that the mental ἀρχή—in the sense in which Plato uses that word in the “Laws”—which separates architecture from a wasp’s nest, a rat hole, or a railway station. [1880.]<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Later passages in the text and notes explain that what Ruskin means by “the mental ἀρχή,” is “arrangement and government received from human mind” (ch. iii. § 2, p. 101); “the intellectual Dominion of Architecture” (ch. iv. § 1 n., p. 138); including “authority over materials” (ch. ii. § 10 n., p. 68). For the sense in which Plato thus uses the word ἀρχή (or rather the verb ἀρχῶ) in the *Laws*, see, e.g., Book ix., 875 D: “Nor can *mind*, without impiety, be deemed the subject or slave of any man, but rather the *ruler* of all.” Compare, with the text and note here, the similar distinctions drawn in *The Poetry of Architecture*, § 133, Vol. I. p. 105. Compare also in Ruskin’s later books, *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, § 60, *The Two Paths*, § 106; and see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. ch. i. (Vol. IV. p. 35 n.), where Ruskin again defends his “subjection of the constructive to the decorative science of architecture which gave so much offence, to architects capable only of construction, in the *Seven Lamps*.”]

bastion be added an unnecessary feature, as a cable moulding, *that* is Architecture. It would be similarly unreasonable to call battlements or machicolations architectural features, so long as they consist only of an advanced gallery supported on projecting masses, with open intervals beneath for offence. But if these projecting masses be carved beneath into rounded courses, which are useless, and if the headings of the intervals be arched and trefoiled, which is useless, *that* is Architecture. It may not be always easy to draw the line so sharply, because there are few buildings which have not some pretence or colour of being architectural; neither can there be any architecture which is not based on building, nor any good architecture which is not based on good building; but it is perfectly easy, and very necessary, to keep the ideas distinct, and to understand fully that Architecture concerns itself only with those characters of an edifice which are above and beyond its common use. I say common; because a building raised to the honour of God, or in memory of men, has surely a use to which its architectural adornment fits it; but not a use which limits, by any inevitable necessities, its plan or details.

§ 2. Architecture proper, then, naturally arranges itself under five heads:—

Devotional; including all buildings raised for God's service or honour.

Memorial; including both monuments and tombs.

Civil; including every edifice raised by nations or societies, for purposes of common business or pleasure.

Military; including all private and public architecture of defence.

Domestic; including every rank and kind of dwelling-place.

Now, of the principles which I would endeavour to develop, while all must be, as I have said, applicable to every stage and style of the art, some, and especially those which are exciting rather than directing, have necessarily fuller reference to one kind of building than another; and among these I would place first that spirit which, having influence in all, has nevertheless such especial reference to devotional and memorial

architecture—the spirit which offers for such work precious things, simply because they are precious ; not as being necessary to the building, but as an offering, surrendering, and sacrifice of what is to ourselves desirable. It seems to me, not only that this feeling is in most cases wholly wanting in those who forward the devotional buildings of the present day ;\* but that it would even be regarded as a dangerous,<sup>1</sup> or perhaps criminal, principle by many among us. I have not space to enter into dispute of all the various objections which may be urged against it—they are many and specious ; but I may, perhaps, ask the reader's patience while I set down those simple reasons which cause me to believe it a good and just feeling, and as well-pleasing to God and honourable in men, as it is beyond all dispute necessary to the production of any great work in the kind with which we are at present concerned.<sup>2</sup>

§ 3. Now, first, to define this Lamp, or Spirit, of Sacrifice, clearly. I have said that it prompts us to the offering of precious things, merely because they are precious, not because they are useful or necessary. It is a spirit, for instance, which of two marbles, equally beautiful, applicable and durable, would choose the more costly, because it was so, and of two

\* The peculiar manner of selfish and impious ostentation, provoked by the glassmakers, for a stimulus to trade, of putting up painted windows to be records of private affection, instead of universal religion, is one of the worst, because most plausible and proud, hypocrisies of our day. [1880.]<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Ed. 1 reads, “ as an ignorant, dangerous, or,” etc.]

<sup>2</sup> [In the manuscript this concluding sentence is as follows :—

“ Now as I believe, not only that the feeling is necessary to the production of any great work, which is a minor matter, but that it is a good and holy feeling and one pleasing to God, and of course, therefore, beneficial and exalting to man, I would much desire to be able to enter at some length into an examination of the reasons which may be alleged against it.

“ I cannot, however, do this in any wise satisfactorily, these hostile reasons being various and many, and my plan and my space permitting me only to state in clear form what I believe to be right, with such of the more manifest reasons for my opinion as may be shortly given ; and to show what results would follow from the acceptance of such a principle ; so that the desire of such results may lead at once to the discussion and trial of the principle itself by others more competent than I to examine it.”]

<sup>3</sup> [The corrected copy has erased :—

“ Note on selfishness, memorial windows,” etc.,  
and it corrects in the Note :—

“ provoked” from “ invented,” “ private” from “ our own earthy,” and  
“ universal religion ” from “ the lives of the saints.”]



kinds of decoration, equally effective, would choose the more elaborate because it was so, in order that it might in the same compass present more cost and more thought. It is therefore most unreasoning and enthusiastic, and perhaps less negatively defined, as the opposite of the prevalent feeling of modern times, which desires to produce the largest results at the least cost.

Of this feeling, then, there are two distinct forms: the first, the wish to exercise self-denial for the sake of self-discipline merely, a wish acted upon in the abandonment of things loved or desired, there being no direct call or purpose to be answered by so doing; and the second, the desire to honour or please some one else by the costliness of the sacrifice. The practice is, in the first case, either private or public; but most frequently, and perhaps most properly, private; while, in the latter case, the act is commonly, and with greatest advantage, public. Now, it cannot but at first appear futile to assert the expediency of self-denial for its own sake, when, for so many sakes, it is every day necessary to a far greater degree than any of us practise it. But I believe it is just because we do not enough acknowledge or contemplate it as a good in itself, that we are apt to fail in its duties when they become imperative, and to calculate, with some partiality, whether the good proposed to others measures or warrants the amount of grievance to ourselves, instead of accepting with gladness the opportunity of sacrifice as a personal advantage. Be this as it may, it is not necessary to insist upon the matter here; since there are always higher and more useful channels of self-sacrifice, for those who choose to practise it, than any connected with the arts.

While in its second branch, that which is especially concerned with the arts, the justice of the feeling is still more doubtful; it depends on our answer to the broad question, Can the Deity be indeed honoured by the presentation to Him of any material objects of value, or by any direction of zeal or wisdom which is not immediately beneficial to men?

For, observe, it is not now the question whether the

fairness and majesty of a building may or may not answer any moral purpose ; it is not the *result* of labour in any sort of which we are speaking, but the bare and mere costliness—the substance and labour and time themselves : are these, we ask, independently of their result, acceptable offerings to God, and considered by Him as doing Him honour? So long as we refer this question to the decision of feeling, or of conscience, or of reason merely, it will be contradictorily or imperfectly answered ; it admits of entire answer only when we have met another and a far different question, whether the Bible be indeed one book or two, and whether the character of God revealed in the Old Testament be other than His character revealed in the New.<sup>1</sup>

§ 4. Now, it is a most secure truth, that, although the particular ordinances divinely appointed for special purposes at any given period of man's history, may be by the same divine authority abrogated, at another, it is impossible that any character of God, appealed to or described in any ordinance past or present, can ever be changed, or understood as changed, by the abrogation of that ordinance. God is one and the same, and is pleased or displeased by the same things for ever, although one part of His pleasure may be expressed at one time rather than another, and although the mode in which His pleasure is to be consulted may be by Him graciously modified to the circumstances of men. Thus, for instance, it was necessary that, in order to the understanding by man of the scheme of Redemption, that scheme should be foreshown from the beginning by the type of bloody sacrifice. But God had no more pleasure in such sacrifice in the time of Moses than He has now ; He never accepted, as a

<sup>1</sup> [The MS. here has the following passage (afterwards erased) amplifying this argument :—

“I cannot but think that a strange feeling which is under various disguises a ruling one with many Christians, that what was acceptable to Jehovah before the scheme of redemption was accomplished is less acceptable when that scheme is fulfilled ; that He ever required from man what He is not, even when He does not require it, willing to receive ; that Christ came to destroy the law instead of to fulfil it, and that the God whose angel dwelt in the tabernacle of the wilderness was less to be worshipped in spirit and in truth than the God who made His tabernacle the flesh of men.”]

propitiation for sin, any sacrifice but the single one in prospective: and that we may not entertain any shadow of doubt on this subject, the worthlessness of all other sacrifice than this is proclaimed at the very time when typical sacrifice was most imperatively demanded. God was a spirit, and could be worshipped only in spirit and in truth,<sup>1</sup> as singly and exclusively when every day brought its claim of typical and material service or offering, as now when He asks for none but that of the heart.<sup>2</sup>

So, therefore, it is a most safe and sure principle that, if in the manner of performing any rite at any time, circumstances can be traced which we are either told or may legitimately conclude, *pleased* God at that time, those same circumstances will please Him at all times, in the performance of all rites or offices to which they may be attached in like manner; unless it has been afterwards revealed that, for some special purpose, it is now His will that such circumstances should be withdrawn. And this argument will have all the more force if it can be shown that such conditions were not essential to the completeness of the rite in its human uses and bearings, and only were added to it as being in *themselves* pleasing to God.

§ 5. Now, was it necessary to the completeness, as a type, of the Levitical sacrifice, or to its utility as an explanation of divine purposes, that it should cost anything to the person in whose behalf it was offered? On the contrary, the sacrifice which it foreshowed, was to be God's free gift; and the cost of, or difficulty of obtaining, the sacrificial type, could only render that type in a measure obscure, and less expressive of the offering which God would in the end provide for all men. Yet this costliness was *generally* a condition of the acceptableness of the sacrifice. "Neither will I offer unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."\* That costliness, therefore, must be an acceptable condition in all human

\* 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. Deut. xvi. 16, 17.

<sup>1</sup> [John iv. 24.]  
[The MS. reads: "as now when men think they owe Him no service from one Sabbath to another."]

offerings at all times; for if it was pleasing to God once, it must please Him always, unless directly forbidden by Him afterwards, which it has never been.

Again, was it necessary to the typical perfection of the Levitical offering, that it should be the best of the flock? Doubtless, the spotlessness of the sacrifice renders it more expressive to the Christian mind; but was it because so expressive that it was actually, and in so many words, demanded by God? Not at all. It was demanded by Him expressly on the same grounds on which an earthly governour would demand it, as a testimony of respect. "Offer it now unto thy governour."\* And the less valuable offering was rejected, not because it did not image Christ, nor fulfil the purposes of sacrifice, but because it indicated a feeling that would grudge the best of its possessions to Him who gave them; and because it was a bold dishonouring of God in the sight of man. Whence it may be infallibly concluded, that in whatever offerings we may now see reason to present unto God (I say not what these may be), a condition of their acceptableness will be now, as it was then, that they should be the best of their kind.

§ 6. But farther,<sup>1</sup> was it necessary to the carrying out of the Mosaical system, that there should be either art or splendour in the form or services of the tabernacle or temple? Was it necessary to the perfection of any one of their typical offices, that there should be that hanging of blue, and purple, and scarlet? those taches of brass and sockets of silver? that working in cedar and overlaying with gold?<sup>2</sup> One thing at least is evident: there was a deep and awful danger in it; a danger that the God whom they so worshipped, might be associated in the minds of the serfs of Egypt with the gods to whom they had seen similar gifts offered and

\* Mal. i. 8.

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<sup>1</sup> [The corrected copy has a note: "*Stones of Venice*, ii. ch. 4 § 51"—at which place this passage is referred to, and the further question (here untouched) is raised—namely, "whether the church, as such, stood in need of adornment, or would be better fitted for its purposes by possessing it."]

<sup>2</sup> [Exodus, ch. xxvi.]



similar honours paid. The probability, in our times, of fellowship with the feelings of the idolatrous Romanist is absolutely as nothing, compared with the danger to the Israelite of a sympathy with the idolatrous Egyptian;<sup>1</sup> no speculative, no unproved danger; but proved fatally by their fall during a month's abandonment to their own will; a fall into the most servile idolatry; yet marked by such offerings to their idol as their leader was, in the close sequel, instructed to bid them offer to God. This danger was imminent, perpetual, and of the most awful kind: it was the one against which God made provision, not only by commandments, by threatenings, by promises, the most urgent, repeated, and impressive; but by temporary ordinances of a severity so terrible as almost to dim for a time, in the eyes of His people, His attribute of mercy. The principal object of every instituted law of that Theocracy, of every judgment sent forth in its vindication, was to mark to the people His hatred of idolatry; a hatred written under their advancing steps, in the blood of the Canaanite, and more sternly still in the darkness of their own desolation, when the children and the sucklings swooned in the streets of Jerusalem, and the lion tracked his prey in the desert of Samaria.\* Yet, against this mortal danger, provision was not made in one way, (to man's thoughts the simplest, the most natural, the most effective,) by withdrawing from the worship of the Divine Being whatever could delight the sense, or shape the imagination,<sup>2</sup> or limit the idea of Deity to place. This one way God refused, demanding for Himself such honours, and accepting for Himself such local dwelling, as had been paid and dedicated to idol gods by heathen worshippers. And for what reason? Was the glory of the tabernacle necessary to set forth or image His divine glory to the minds of His people? What! purple or scarlet necessary, to the people who had seen the great river of Egypt run scarlet to the sea, under His

\* Lam. ii. 11. 2 Kings xvii. 25.

<sup>1</sup> [See the author's note at the end of the text, p. 267.]

<sup>2</sup> [The MS. reads: "or excite the carnal imagination."]

condemnation? What! golden lamp and cherub necessary, for those who had seen the fires of heaven falling like a mantle on Mount Sinai, and its golden courts opened to receive their mortal lawgiver? What! silver clasp and fillet necessary, when they had seen the silver waves of the Red Sea clasp in their arched hollows the corpses of the horse and his rider? Nay—not so.\* There was but one reason, and that an eternal one; that as the covenant that He made with men was accompanied with some external sign of its continuance, and of His remembrance of it, so the acceptance of that covenant might be marked and signified by men, in some external sign of their love and obedience, and surrender of themselves and theirs to His will; and that their gratitude to Him and continual remembrance of Him, might have at once their expression, and their enduring testimony, in the presentation to Him, not only of the firstlings of the herd and fold, not only of the fruits of the earth and the tithe of time, but of all treasures of wisdom and beauty; of the thought that invents, and the hand that labours; of wealth of wood, and weight of stone; of the strength of iron, and the light of gold.

And let us not now lose sight of this broad and unabrogated principle—I might say, incapable of being abrogated, so long as men shall receive earthly gifts from God. Of all that they have, His tithe must be rendered to Him, or in so far and in so much He is forgotten: of the skill and of the treasure, of the strength and of the mind, of the time and of the toil, offering must be made reverently; and if there be any difference between the Levitical and the Christian offering, it is that the latter may be just so much the wider in its range as it is less typical in its meaning, as it is thankful instead of sacrificial. There can be no excuse accepted because the Deity does not now visibly dwell in His temple; if He is invisible it is only through our failing

\* Yes,—very much so. The impression of all temporary vision wears off next day in the minds of the common people. Continual splendour is necessary and wholesome for them: and the sacrifices required by Heaven were never useless. [1880.]

faith: nor any excuse because other calls are more immediate or more sacred; this ought to be done, and not the other left undone. Yet this objection, as frequent as feeble, must be more specifically answered.

§ 7. It has been said—it ought always to be said, for it is true,—that a better and more honourable offering is made to our Master in ministry to the poor, in extending the knowledge of His name, in the practice of the virtues by which that name is hallowed, than in material presents to His temple. Assuredly it is so: woe to all who think that any other kind or manner of offering may in any wise take the place of these! Do the people need place to pray, and calls to hear His word? Then it is no time for smoothing pillars or carving pulpits; let us have enough first of walls and roofs. Do the people need teaching from house to house, and bread from day to day? Then they are deacons and ministers we want, not architects. I insist on this, I plead for this; but let us examine ourselves, and see if this be indeed the reason for our backwardness in the lesser work. The question is not between God's house and His poor: it is not between God's house and His Gospel. It is between God's house and ours. Have we no tessellated colours on our floors? no frescoed fancies on our roofs? no niched statuary in our corridors? no gilded furniture in our chambers? no costly stones in our cabinets? Has even the tithe of these been offered? They are, or they ought to be, the signs that enough has been devoted to the great purposes of human stewardship, and that there remains to us what we can spend in luxury; but there is a greater and prouder luxury than this selfish one—that of bringing a portion of such things as these into sacred service, and presenting them for a memorial\* that our pleasure as well as our toil has been hallowed by the remembrance of Him who gave both the strength and the reward. And until this has been done, I do not see how such possessions can be retained in happiness. I do not understand the feeling

\* Num. xxxi. 54. Psa. lxxvi. 11.

which would arch our own gates and pave our own thresholds, and leave the church with its narrow door and foot-worn sill; the feeling which enriches our own chambers with all manner of costliness, and endures the bare wall and mean compass of the temple. There is seldom even so severe a choice to be made, seldom so much self-denial to be exercised. There are isolated cases, in which men's happiness and mental activity depend upon a certain degree of luxury in their houses; but then this is true luxury, felt and tasted, and profited by. In the plurality of instances nothing of the kind is attempted, nor can be enjoyed;<sup>1</sup> men's average resources cannot reach it; and that which they *can* reach, gives them no pleasure, and might be spared. It will be seen, in the course of the following chapters, that I am no advocate for meanness of private habitation. I would fain introduce into it all magnificence, care, and beauty, where they are possible; but I would not have that useless expense in unnoticed fineries or formalities; cornicing of ceilings and graining of doors, and fringing of curtains, and thousands such;<sup>3</sup> things which have become foolishly

APHORISM  
5.

*Domestic  
luxury is to be  
sacrificed to  
national mag-  
nificence.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [From here to the end of the sentence the MS. reads:—

“or even granting its desirableness, yet in mere selfish policy (I am ashamed to name such a motive in conjunction with the one I have been urging hitherto), in mere worldly comparison of resource and result, it would be wiser to unite our means and to build one noble building, ‘a joy for ever’ to all, than to break them up in private profitlessness.”

This passage, it will be seen, contains the germ of much of the lectures in *The Political Economy of Art* (1857), reprinted in 1880 under the title of *A Joy for Ever*.]

<sup>2</sup> [The text of this aphorism, in black-letter in the 1880 edition, is from “It will be seen . . .” to the end of § 7.]

<sup>3</sup> [An odd sheet of MS. amplifies this passage:—

“ . . . useless expense in unnoticed fineries—marble chimney-pieces of stone-mason pattern, which neither make a man more warm nor more happy than brick hearths; gilded stucco frames for circular mirrors, projecting into stranger birds with their feathers glued together or chipped off—neither frame nor mirror answering other purpose than that of holding dust and turning the room upside down; silent alabaster timepieces under bell glasses, which have not half the companionship in them of an old clock that would keep time; mahogany tables with bead work and claws which it took the carpenter many an hour to cut, and which were counted by bead and by talon in the upholsterer's bill, but which are never seen nor cared for from one year's end to another,—as if one of plain deal with straight legs would not as efficiently sustain either the desk or the dinner;—innumerable expenses in cornicing of ceilings . . .”

The subject of graining and marbling and other such “spurious arts” is discussed more at length in *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. ch. i. §§ 39 *seqq.*]



and apathetically habitual—things on whose common appliance hang whole trades, to which there never yet belonged the blessing of giving one ray of real pleasure, or becoming of the remotest or most contemptible use—things which cause half the expense of life, and destroy more than half its comfort, manliness, respectability, freshness, and facility. I speak from experience: I know what it is to live in a cottage with a deal floor and roof,<sup>1</sup> and a hearth of mica slate; and I know it to be in many respects healthier and happier than living between a Turkey carpet and gilded ceiling, beside a steel grate and polished fender. I do not say that such things have not their place and propriety; but I say this, emphatically, that the tenth part of the expense which is sacrificed in domestic vanities, if not absolutely and meaninglessly lost in domestic discomforts and incumbrances, would, if collectively offered and wisely employed, build a marble church for every town in England; such a church as it should be a joy and a blessing even to pass near in our daily ways and walks, and as it would bring the light into the eyes to see from afar, lifting its fair height above the purple crowd of humble roofs.

§ 8. I have said for every town: I do not want a marble church for every village; nay, I do not want marble churches at all for their own sake, but for the sake of the spirit that would build them. The church has no need of any visible splendours; her power is independent of them, her purity is in some degree opposed to them. The simplicity of a pastoral sanctuary is lovelier than the majesty of an urban temple; and it may be more than questioned whether, to the people, such majesty has ever been the source of any increase of effective piety;\* but to the builders it has been, and must ever be. It is not the church we want, but the sacrifice; not the

\* Yes, it may be more than questioned; it may be angrily—or sorrowfully—denied: but never by entirely humble and thoughtful persons. The subject was first placed by me, without any remains of Presbyterian prejudice, in the aspect which it must take on purely rational grounds, in my second Oxford inaugural lecture.<sup>2</sup> [1880.]

<sup>1</sup> [As, e.g., in the little inn at Macugnaga in 1845; see *Præterita*, ii. ch. vii.]

<sup>2</sup> [See *Lectures on Art*, ch. ii. §§ 60–65.]

emotion of admiration, but the act of adoration; not the gift, but the giving.\* And see how much more charity the full understanding of this might admit, among classes of men of naturally opposite feelings; and how much more nobleness in the work. There is no need to offend by importunate, self-proclaimant splendour. Your gift may be given in an unpresuming way.<sup>1</sup> Cut one or two shafts out of a porphyry whose preciousness those only would know who would desire it to be so used; add another month's labour to the undercutting of a few capitals, whose delicacy will not be seen nor

\* Much attention has lately been directed to the subject of religious art, and we are now in possession of all kinds of interpretations and classifications of it, and of the leading facts of its history. But the greatest question of all connected with it remains entirely unanswered, What good did it do to real religion? There is no subject into which I should so much rejoice to see a serious and conscientious inquiry instituted as this; an inquiry, undertaken neither in artistical enthusiasm, nor in monkish sympathy, but dogged, merciless, and fearless. I love the religious art of Italy as well as most men,<sup>2</sup> but there is a wide difference between loving it as a manifestation of individual feeling, and looking to it as an instrument of popular benefit. I have not knowledge enough to form even the shadow of an opinion on this latter point, and I should be most grateful to any one who could put it in my power to do so. There are, as it seems to me, three distinct questions to be considered: The first, What has been the effect of external splendour on the genuineness and earnestness of Christian worship? The second, What the use of pictorial or sculptural representations in the communication of Christian historical knowledge, or excitement of affectionate imagination? The third, What the influence of the practice of religious art on the life of the artist?

In answering these inquiries, we should have to consider separately every collateral influence and circumstance; and, by a most subtle analysis, to eliminate the real effect of art from the effects of the abuses with which it was associated. This could be done only by a Christian; not a man who would fall in love with a sweet colour or sweet expression, but who would look for true faith and consistent life as the object of all. It never has been done yet, and the question remains a subject of vain and endless contention between parties of opposite prejudices and temperaments.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [The MS. inserts, "Build the walls of marble all through instead of facing with it only. . . ."]

<sup>2</sup> [The MS. here inserts (afterwards erased), "and I have spent some of the happiest hours of my life among the Franciscans of Fiesolè"—a reference to his sojourn at Florence in 1845; see Vol. IV. p. 352.]

<sup>3</sup> [This was note 2 at the end of the text in eds. 1 and 2. It was omitted in later editions. The inquiries thus propounded were touched on by Ruskin throughout his works; his most deliberate statements being contained in the Oxford *Lectures on Art* just referred to.]

loved by one beholder of ten thousand ;<sup>1</sup> see that the simplest masonry of the edifice be perfect and substantial ; and to those who regard such things, their witness will be clear and impressive ; to those who regard them not, all will at least be inoffensive. But do not think the feeling itself a folly, or the act itself useless. Of what use was that dearly bought water of the well of Bethlehem with which the king of Israel slaked the dust of Adullam ? yet was it not thus better than if he had drunk it ?<sup>2</sup> Of what use was that passionate act of Christian sacrifice, against which, first uttered by the false tongue, the very objection we would now conquer took a sullen tone for ever ?\* So also let us not ask of what use our offering is to the church : it is at least better for *us* than if it had been retained for ourselves. It may be better for others also : there is, at any rate, a chance of this ; though we must always fearfully and widely shun the thought that the magnificence of the temple can materially add to the efficiency of the worship or to the power of the ministry. Whatever we do, or whatever we offer, let it not interfere with the simplicity of the one, or abate, as if replacing, the zeal of the other. †

\* John xii. 5. [The second question is not in the MS.]

† Thirteen lines of vulgar attack on Roman-Catholicism are here—with much gain to the chapter's grace, and purification of its truth—omitted.<sup>3</sup> [1880.]

<sup>1</sup> [See further, below, § 11, p. 47.]

<sup>2</sup> [2 Samuel xxiii. 16.]

<sup>3</sup> [The omitted lines are as follows :—

“That is the abuse and fallacy of Romanism by which the true spirit of Christian offering is directly contradicted. The treatment of the Papists' temple is eminently exhibitory ; it is surface work throughout ; and the danger and evil of their church decoration altogether, lie, not in its reality—not in the true wealth and art of which the lower people are never cognizant—but in its tinsel and glitter, in the gildings of the shrine and painting of the image, in embroidery of dingy robes and crowding of imitated gems ; all this being frequently thrust forward to the concealment of what is really good or great in their buildings.<sup>1</sup> Of an offering of gratitude which is neither to be exhibited nor rewarded, which is neither to win praise nor purchase salvation, the Romanist (as such) has no conception.”

The note (No. 3 at the end of the text in eds. 1 and 2) was as follows :—

<sup>1</sup> “*To the concealment of what is really good or great.*” I have often been surprised at the supposition that Romanism, in its present condition, could either patronise art, or profit by it. The noble painted windows of St. Maclou at Rouen, and many other churches in France, are entirely blocked up

§ 9. While, however, I would especially deprecate the imputation of any other acceptableness or usefulness to the gift itself than that which it receives from the spirit of its presentation, it may be well to observe, that there is a lower advantage which never fails to accompany a dutiful observance of any right abstract principle. While the first fruits of his possessions were required from the Israelite as a testimony of fidelity, the payment of those first fruits was nevertheless rewarded, and that connectedly and specifically, by the increase of those possessions. Wealth, and length of days, and peace,<sup>1</sup> were the promised and experienced rewards of his offering, though they were not to be the objects of it. The tithe paid into the storehouse, was the express condition of the blessing which there should not be room enough to receive. And it will be thus always: God never forgets any work or labour of love; and whatever it may be of which the first and best portions or powers have been presented to Him, He will multiply and increase sevenfold. Therefore, though

behind the altars by the erection of huge gilded wooden sunbeams, with interspersed cherubs."

The MS. adds :—

"painted red and white. And for the pageantry of Romanism which is said to have so overwhelming an effect upon the faith of many, the chief impression it has always produced on me has been that of wonder that, considering how much depended on it, it should be so marvellously ill-managed for effect."

In the MS. the passage, "in the gildings . . . gems," ran "in the gilded doll and painted puppet, in the faded riband and dingy lace, in the theatrical robe and imitated jewel," while the earlier portion of the note is as follows :—

"While I admit it to be a question whether art has ever promoted true religion, I have a right to oppose the idea of its having been made efficient in the advancement of abstract Romanism. I am surprised at its not being more frequently observed that real art is of no service to the Romanist. Give him the best and most precious picture in the world, and though he will indeed use it as a piece of furniture behind his candles, and smoke the top of it and drop wax over the bottom of it, yet, as an idol, or even as an historic representation, it is of no use to him whatever until he has cut a hole in it, and put real pewter crowns on the heads of all the saints in it. Give him a Pietà by Michael Angelo, and he will put it in a niche out of the way where it will never be seen; a group of wooden images from the established makers with real lace dresses on them, and highly painted, is what he wants for practical purposes. The noble painted windows of the east end of St. Maclou, St. Vincent, St. Patrice, and other churches in Rouen are concealed behind gilded wooden carvings from twenty to thirty feet across, representing square rays of the sun of the size of oar blades, piercing volumes of smoke, with bunches of suspended cherubs."

<sup>1</sup> [Proverbs iii. 16. Cf. *A Joy for Ever*, § 120.]



it may not be necessarily the interest of religion to admit the service of the arts, the arts will never flourish until they have been primarily devoted to that service—devoted,<sup>1</sup> both by architect and employer; by the one in scrupulous, earnest, affectionate design; by the other in expenditure at least more frank, at least less calculating, than that which he would admit in the indulgence of his own private feelings. Let this principle be but once fairly acknowledged among us; and however it may be chilled and repressed in practice, however feeble may be its real influence, however the sacredness of it may be diminished by counter-workings of vanity and self-interest, yet its mere acknowledgment would bring a reward; and with our present accumulation of means and of intellect, there would be such an impulse and vitality given to art as it has not felt since the thirteenth century. And I do not assert this as other than a natural consequence: I should, indeed, expect a larger measure of every great and spiritual faculty to be always given where those faculties had been wisely and religiously employed; but the impulse to which I refer, would be, humanly speaking, certain; and would naturally result from obedience to the two great conditions enforced by the Spirit of Sacrifice, first, that we should in everything do our best; and, secondly, that we should consider increase of apparent labour as an increase of beauty in the building. A few practical deductions from these two conditions, and I have done.

§ 10. For the first: it is alone enough to secure success, and it is for want of observing it that we continually fail. We are none of us so good architects<sup>2</sup> as to be able to work habitually beneath our strength; and yet there is not a building that I know of, lately raised, wherein it is not sufficiently evident that neither architect nor builder has done his best.

<sup>1</sup> [The MS. reads thus:—

“Devoted, not merely directed, not purchased as if for any other purpose, and coldly set to labour with the mason and bricklayer, on the same terms; not offered at the lowest possible price, in the smallest possible quantity, not mercenarily dealt out on the one hand, or parsimoniously bargained for on the other; but devoted, both by architect . . .”]

<sup>2</sup> [The MS. inserts, “or sculptors either.”]

It is the especial characteristic of modern work. All old work nearly has been hard work.<sup>1</sup> It may be the hard work of children, of barbarians, of rustics; but it is always their utmost. Ours has as constantly the look of money's worth, of a stopping short wherever and whenever we can, of a lazy compliance with low conditions; never of a fair putting forth of our strength.<sup>3</sup> Let us have done with this kind of work at once: cast off every temptation to it: do not let us degrade ourselves voluntarily, and then mutter and mourn over our shortcomings; let us confess our poverty or our parsimony, but not belie our human intellect. It is not even a question of how *much* we are to do, but of how it is to be done; it is not a question of doing more, but of doing better. Do not let us boss our roofs with wretched, half-worked, blunt-edged rosettes; do not let us flank our gates with rigid imitations of mediæval statuary. Such things are mere insults to common sense, and only unfit us for feeling the nobility of their prototypes. We have so much, suppose, to be spent in decoration; let us go to the Flaxman of his time, whoever he may be;<sup>4</sup> and bid him carve for us a single statue, frieze, or capital, or as many as we can afford, compelling upon him the one condition, that they shall be the best he can do; place them where they will be of the most value, and be content. Our other capitals may be mere blocks, and our other niches empty. No matter: better our work unfinished than all bad. It may be that we do not desire ornament of so high an order: choose, then, a less developed style, as also, if you will, rougher material; the law which we are enforcing requires only that what we pretend to do and to give, shall both be

APHORISM  
6.

*Modern  
builders are  
capable of  
little; and  
don't even do the  
little they can.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [For another side to this truth, that all great art is done easily, see, e.g., *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xvi. § 27, and Letters to J. J. Laing, at pp. 11, 21 of the privately printed *Letters on Art and Literature*, edited by Thomas J. Wise, 1894 (given in a later volume of this edition).]

<sup>2</sup> [The text of the aphorism, in black-letter in the 1880 edition, is from "We are none of us . . ." down to "not belie our human intellect."]

<sup>3</sup> [The MS. here reads: "I think a man's pride as well as his conscience should equally revolt from such voluntary degradation. Cast off . . ."]

<sup>4</sup> [See *Elements of Drawing*, § 257 n., for a further note on Flaxman to some extent qualifying the above.]

the best of their kind ; choose, therefore, the Norman hatchet work, instead of the Flaxman frieze<sup>1</sup> and statue, but let it be the best hatchet work ; and if you cannot afford marble, use Caen stone, but from the best bed ; and if not stone, brick, but the best brick ; preferring always what is good of a lower order of work or material, to what is bad of a higher ; for this is not only the way to improve every kind of work, and to put every kind of material to better use ; but it is more honest and unpretending, and is in harmony with other just, upright, and manly principles, whose range we shall have presently to take into consideration.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [John Flaxman, R.A. (1755-1826), first came into repute, it will be remembered, as a modeller of classic and domestic friezes.]

<sup>2</sup> [An odd sheet of MS. contains an interesting variant of the foregoing passage :—  
 “. . . What can be so purifying, what so ennobling to every mental power, as its unselfish exercise. If not in any other cause yet surely in that of Religion, petty jealousies and unseemly vanities must in a measure vanish, and the very action of the imagination take place in a pure atmosphere. The mere desire to do our best is enough. (Not to do better than others but our own best for ourselves. The deep trouble and disgrace of envy destroys the creature's powers : a man may desire to do well, and labour with all his might, and he will not do what he might have done if his purpose be to eclipse another. It must be a calm, humble, happy ambition that will carry us on. We might as well think to get the reflection of a fair landscape in troubled water as a great range of imaginative power in an envious mind. But the will to do the best possible is far different. Art is hard enough when we have this will, but she laughs to scorn our insincere efforts without it. We must begin with the conception—the aim at perfection. But the will to do the best possible, and that for the sake of some other cause than ourselves, is the very temper in which the greatest things are done) ; and it is exactly this which is the consequence of the Spirit of Sacrifice. For while that Spirit leaves to every man's conscience the amount of his gift—it dictates positively the single condition that it shall be of his best. And let this condition be as positively observed. Let nothing that is not as good as it *can* be ever be made a part of church architecture. Whatever stone we build with must be the best stone of the kind ; we may not be able to afford marble, then let it be Caen or Portland, but the best bed of either. We may not be able to afford stone ; build of brick, but of the best brick, do not let it be said ‘cheaper material will do in this part or in that part’ ; it may answer its purpose as material, but it will not answer its purpose as an offering. So in the ornamentation, we may not be able to afford much, but let what is given be beautiful and as far carried as may be. Do not dot the ceilings or finish the leads with wretched, half-worked, blunt-edged, sickly-faced bosses and gargoyles : do not put up miserable imitations of mediæval statuary ; we are foolish and weak if we are pleased with such things, they unfit us for feeling the nobility of their prototypes, they are a thousand-fold worse than plain vaults and walls, they are insults alike to religion and common sense, and we are none of us such good architects nor sculptors neither as to be able with impunity to work habitually beneath our strength, and, being able to do little, stop short of that little.”]

§ 11. The other condition which we had to notice, was the value of the appearance of labour upon architecture. I have spoken of this before;\* and it is, indeed, one of the most frequent sources of pleasure which belong to the art, always, however, within certain somewhat remarkable limits. For it does not at first appear easily to be explained why labour, as represented by materials of value, should, without sense of wrong or error, bear being wasted; while the waste of actual workmanship is always painful, so soon as it is apparent. But so it is, that, while precious materials may, with a certain profusion and negligence, be employed for the magnificence of what is seldom seen, the work of man cannot be carelessly and idly bestowed, without an immediate sense of wrong; as if the strength of the living creature were never intended by its Maker to be sacrificed in vain, though it is well for us sometimes to part with what we esteem precious of substance, as showing that in such service it becomes but dross and dust. And in the nice balance between the straitening of effort or enthusiasm on the one hand, and vainly casting it away upon the other, there are more questions than can be met by any but very just and watchful feeling. In general it is less the mere loss of labour that offends us, than the lack of judgment implied by such loss; so that if men confessedly work for work's sake,† and it does not appear that they are ignorant where or how to make their labour tell, we shall not be grossly offended. On the contrary, we shall be pleased if the work be lost in carrying out a principle, or in avoiding a deception. It, indeed, is a law properly belonging to another part of our subject, but it may be allowably stated here, that, whenever, by the construction of a building, some parts of it are hidden from the eye which are the continuation of others

\* *Modern Painters*, Part I. Sec. 1. Chap. 3. [Vol. III. p. 94 of this edition.]

† Obscurely expressed. I meant, if they worked to show their respect for what they are doing, and gladness in doing all they can—not in the idea of producing impossible effects, or impressing the spectator with a quantity of bad, when they can do nothing that's good. "Sacrificed," in the next sentence, would have been a better word than "lost." [1880.]



bearing some consistent ornament, it is not well that the ornament should cease in the parts concealed; credit is given for it, and it should not be deceptively withdrawn: as, for instance, in the sculpture of the backs of the statues of a temple pediment; never, perhaps, to be seen, but yet not lawfully to be left unfinished.<sup>1</sup> And so in the working out of ornaments in dark or concealed places, in which it is best to err on the side of completion; and in the carrying round of string courses, and other such continuous work; not but that they may stop sometimes, on the point of going into some palpably impenetrable recess, but then let them stop boldly and markedly, on some distinct terminal ornament, and never be supposed to exist where they do not. The arches of the towers which flank the transepts of Rouen Cathedral have rosette ornaments on their spandrels, on the three visible sides; none on the side towards the roof. The right of this is rather a nice point for question.

§ 12. Visibility, however, we must remember, depends, not only on situation, but on distance; and there is no way in which work is more painfully and unwisely lost than in its

<sup>1</sup> [Compare, on this point of finish in sculpture even where it is invisible, *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. ch. i. §§ 42, 43, where Ruskin denounces the heartlessness of the sculptor who stayed his hand in the portrait on a tomb, as soon as he reached a side of the face invisible from below. The "Lamp of Sacrifice" lighted the Greek sculptors of the best time. In the sculptures of the Parthenon the backs which were set against the wall and could never be seen by human eye are nevertheless finished hardly less carefully than the other parts. This practice is notable, whether it were due to a feeling that the truth of the visible could only be secured if the whole work were sculptured, or to "the true love-sacrifice of a genuine artistic soul." This is the explanation of the sculptor Rietschl, who says:—"It has always filled me with a feeling of tender admiration, that the figures of the Parthenon are as carefully finished behind as before. The artist knew that when these statues had left his hands and studio, no mortal eye could ever see the charming work which his love and diligence had created and cherished. And now, after 2000 years, we are permitted, rather by a happy accident than by historical necessity, to discover the true love-sacrifices of a genuine artistic soul. Why did the artist do that, in doing which he seemed to lose so much time and labour? He did it from a truly godlike creative impulse to call his work into being in full perfection, and for its own sake, as the flower springs up on the lonely uplands to bloom in the wilderness unvisited by man or beast. It serves no animal for food, and yet it is as perfectly developed as the most sumptuous flower in an ornamental garden" (W. C. Perry's *Greek and Roman Sculpture*, p. 271). For other illustrations of this subject from ancient art, see E. T. Cook's *Popular Handbook to the Greek and Roman Antiquities in the British Museum*, pp. 307, 451, and cf. the passage from Renan's "Prayer on the Acropolis" cited below, p. 53. It is interesting to reflect how much of the great art of the world was spent in places where it was never intended to be seen at all, or where it could only be seen with difficulty.]

over delicacy on parts distant from the eye. Here, again, the principle of honesty must govern our treatment: we must not work any kind of ornament which is, perhaps, to cover the whole building (or at least to occur on all parts of it) delicately where it is near the eye, and rudely where it is removed from it. That is trickery and dishonesty.\* Consider, first, what kinds of ornaments will tell in the distance and what near, and so distribute them, keeping such as by their nature are delicate, down near the eye, and throwing the bold and rough kinds of work to the top; and if there be any kind which is to be both near and far off, take care that it be as<sup>1</sup> boldly and rudely wrought where it is well seen as where it is distant, so that the spectator may know exactly what it is, and what it is worth. Thus chequered patterns, and in general such ornaments as common workmen can execute, may extend over the whole building; but bas-reliefs, and fine niches and capitals, should be kept down; and the common sense of this will always give a building dignity, even though there be some abruptness or awkwardness in the resulting arrangements. Thus at San Zeno at Verona, the bas-reliefs, full of incident and interest, are confined to a parallelogram of the front, reaching to the height of the capitals of the columns of the porch.<sup>2</sup> Above these, we find a simple, though most lovely, little arcade; and above that, only blank wall, with square face shafts. The whole effect

\* There is too much stress laid, throughout this volume, on probity in picturesque treatment, and not enough on probity in material construction. No rascal will ever build a pretty building,—but the common sense, which is the root of virtue, will have more to say in a strong man's design than his finer sentiments. In the fulfilment of his contract honourably, there will be more test of his higher feelings than in his modes of sculpture. But the concluding sentences of the chapter from this point forward are all quite right, and can't be much better put. [1880.]

<sup>1</sup> [The MS. reads :—

“that it be not only coarse (or rather bold, for no work need be coarse, however simple) but as boldly,” etc.]

<sup>2</sup> [Cf. *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, § 67. The whole of the Addenda to Lectures I. and II. in that book, §§ 57–76, should be compared with this chapter. San Zeno was a favourite church with Ruskin, and is often discussed or illustrated in his books; see, e.g., Plate 17 in *Stones of Venice*, vol. i., and fig. 42 in *Modern Painters*, vol. v. Mr. W. M. Rossetti records in his diary (July 6, 1864) that “the custode, a

is tenfold grander and better than if the entire façade had been covered with bad work, and may serve for an example of the way to place little where we cannot afford much. So again, the transept gates of Rouen \* are covered with delicate bas-reliefs (of which I shall speak at greater length presently) up to about once and a half a man's height; and above that come the usual and more visible statues and niches. So in the campanile at Florence, the circuit of bas-reliefs is on its lowest storey; above that come its statues; and above them all is pattern mosaic, and twisted columns,<sup>1</sup> exquisitely finished, like all Italian work of the time, but still, in the eye of the Florentine, rough and commonplace by comparison with the bas-reliefs. So generally the most delicate niche work and best mouldings of the French Gothic are in gates and low windows well within sight; although, it being the very spirit of that style to trust to its exuberance for effect, there is occasionally a burst upwards and blossoming unrestrainably to the sky, as in the pediment of the west front of Rouen, and in the recess of the rose window behind it, where there are some most elaborate flower-mouldings, all but invisible from below, and only adding a general enrichment to the deep shadows that relieve the shafts of the advanced pediment. It is observable, however, that this very work is bad flamboyant, and has corrupt renaissance characters in its detail as well as use; while in the earlier and grander north and south gates, there is a very noble proportioning of the work to the distance, the niches and statues which crown the northern one, at a height of about one hundred feet from the ground, being alike colossal and simple; visibly so from below, so as to induce no deception, and yet honestly and well finished above, and all that they are expected to be; the

\* Henceforward, for the sake of convenience, when I name any cathedral town in this manner, let me be understood to speak of its cathedral church.

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most intelligent young man, who takes the most genuine interest in his church, remembers Ruskin well, and seems to have been imbued with some of his love for the old, hatred of restorations, etc." "The same custode," adds Mr. Rossetti, "was still there when I last visited Verona" (*Rossetti Papers*, 1903, p. 58).]

<sup>1</sup> [See Plate ix. (frontispiece, and p. 138).]

features very beautiful, full of expression, and as delicately wrought as any work of the period.

§ 13. It is to be remembered, however, that while the ornaments in every fine ancient building, without exception so far as I am aware, are most delicate at the base, they are often in greater effective *quantity* on the upper parts. In high towers this is perfectly natural and right, the solidity of the foundation being as necessary as the division and penetration of the superstructure; hence the lighter work and richly pierced crowns of late Gothic towers. The campanile of Giotto at Florence, already alluded to, is an exquisite instance of the union of the two principles, delicate bas-reliefs adorning its massy foundation, while the open tracery of the upper windows attracts the eye by its slender intricacy, and a rich cornice crowns the whole.<sup>1</sup> In such truly fine cases of this disposition the upper work is effective by its quantity and intricacy only, as the lower portions by delicacy; so also in the Tour de Beurre at Rouen,<sup>2</sup> where, however, the detail is massy throughout, subdividing into rich meshes as it ascends. In the bodies of buildings the principle is less safe, but its discussion is not connected with our present subject.

§ 14. Finally, work may be wasted by being too good for its material, or too fine to bear exposure; and this, generally a characteristic of late, especially of renaissance, work, is perhaps the worst fault of all. I do not know anything more painful or pitiful than the kind of ivory carving with which the Certosa of Pavia,<sup>3</sup> and part of the Colleone sepulchral chapel at

<sup>1</sup> [For detailed descriptions and illustration of the Campanile, see *Mornings in Florence* and *The Shepherd's Tower*.]

<sup>2</sup> [The S.W. tower is so called because built (1485–1507) with the money paid for dispensations to eat butter in Lent. For drawings of it by Ruskin, see Vol. II. pp. 400, 430.]

<sup>3</sup> [For further criticisms of the Certosa, see *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. ch. i. § 35, ch. xx. § 14; review of Lord Lindsay, in *On the Old Road*, 1899, vol. i. § 41; *Aratra Pentelici*, § 160; and *Præterita*, iii. ch. i. § 8. With these passages may be compared Ruskin's impressions as given in a letter to his father (Milan, July 16, 1845):—

“The Certosa which I saw yesterday afternoon is, in elaborateness and quantity of labour, far more marvellous than my recollection of it. In quality of art, far inferior. Its style is singularly bad; it has no monasterial feeling; it seems built for ornament; it reminded me of the architectural designs of things impossible in the Royal Academy. It has a nasty, English, Chelsea Hospital, Hampton Court twang about it; and the details, whose labour is



Bergamo,<sup>1</sup> and other such buildings are incrustated, of which it is not possible so much as to think without exhaustion; and a heavy sense of the misery it would be, to be forced to look at it all. And this is not from the quantity of it, nor because it is bad work—much of it is inventive and able; but because it looks as if it were only fit to be put in inlaid cabinets and velveted caskets, and as if it could not bear one drifting shower or gnawing frost. We are afraid for it, anxious about it, and tormented by it; and we feel that a massy shaft and a bold shadow would be worth it all. Nevertheless, even in cases like these, much depends on the accomplishment of the great ends of decoration. If the ornament does its duty—if it *is* ornament, and its points of shade and light tell in the general effect, we shall not be offended by finding that the sculptor in his fulness of fancy has chosen to give much more than these mere points of light, and has composed them of groups of figures. But if the ornament does not answer its purpose, if it have no distant, no truly decorative power; if, generally seen, it be a mere incrustation and meaningless roughness, we shall only be chagrined by finding when we look close, that the incrustation has cost years of labour, and has millions of figures

quite overwhelming, only nauseate one from their profusion without even giving a single bit of good, pure, great art. After what I have been among in Florence, it looks all derivative and diluted and made me sick—like the metrical version of the Psalms. It is not *barbarous*. It is an attempt by people without mind or feeling to imitate what is good. But it is all done to be *fine*, nothing for a simple or great purpose. One little bit of Florentine cypress cloister is worth a thousand such buildings, and one little bit of Oragna is worth centuries of work in such sculpture. I never was so overwhelmed with mediocrity.”]

<sup>1</sup> [Of this building (adjoining the church of Sta. Maria Maggiore and now restored) Ruskin gives the following account in his diary of 1846 (May 10) :—

“The chapel of Colleone is one of the most vicious specimens of 15th century work; the windows of it are filled up with columns, of which,—each being different from the rest, not in decoration, but in all its proportions and thicknesses, some round, some square, some thickest at the top and others beneath,—the effect is as if they had been brought together by accident, while each is individually of vulgar proportion and more like a candlestick than a column; the awkward shafts of the wheel window are singularly offensive; the work itself even in the details is poor; no invention, though abundance of quantity, the want of feeling throughout being singularly enhanced by finding bas-reliefs of Hercules and Hylas, Hercules and the Nemean Lion, and Hercules and the Hydra, mixed up with those of Cain and Abel and the usual scripture subjects. As might be expected from their position, the profane subjects are not classical, nor the scriptural ones religious.”]

and histories in it; and would be the better of being seen through a Stanhope lens.<sup>1</sup> Hence the greatness of the northern Gothic as contrasted with the latest Italian. It reaches nearly the same extreme of detail; but it never loses sight of its architectural purpose, never fails in its decorative power; not a leaflet in it but speaks, and speaks far off too; and so long as this be the case, there is no limit to the luxuriance in which such work may legitimately and nobly be bestowed.

§ 15. No limit; it is one of the affectations of architects to speak of overcharged ornament. Ornament cannot be overcharged if it be good, and is always overcharged when it is bad. I have given, on the opposite page (Fig. 1), one of the smallest niches of the central gate of Rouen. That gate I suppose to be the most exquisite piece of pure flamboyant work existing; for though I have spoken of the upper portions, especially the receding window, as degenerate,<sup>2</sup> the gate itself is of a purer period, and has hardly any renaissance taint. There are four strings of these niches (each with two figures beneath it) round the porch, from the ground to the top of the arch, with three intermediate rows of larger niches, far more elaborate; besides the six principal canopies of each outer pier. The total number of the subordinate niches alone, each worked like that in the plate, and each with a different pattern of traceries in each compartment, is one hundred and seventy-six.\* Yet in all this ornament there is not one cusp, one finial, that is useless—not a stroke of the chisel is in vain; the grace and luxuriance of it all are visible—sensible rather—even to the

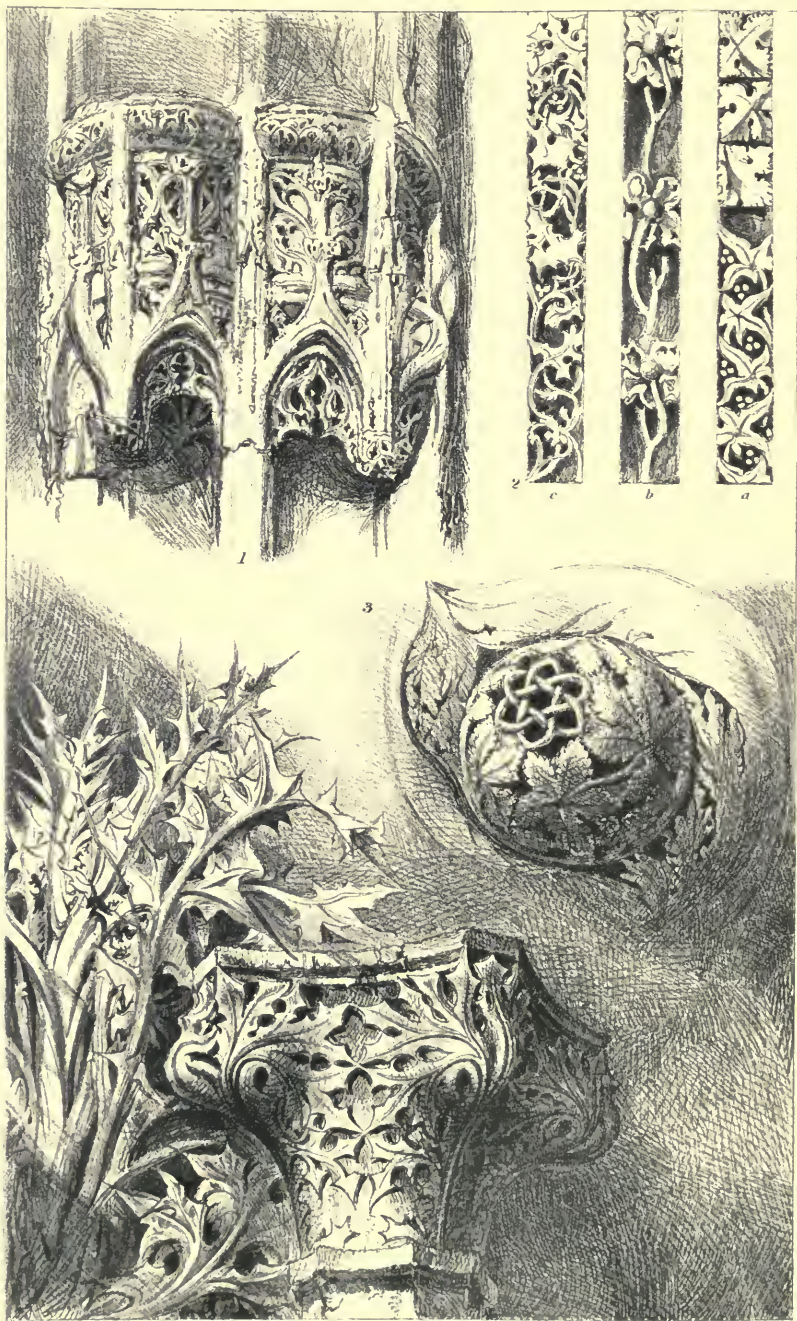
\* I have certainly not examined the seven hundred and four traceries (four to each niche) so as to be sure that none are alike; but they have the aspect of continual variation, and *even the roses of the pendants of the small groined niche roofs* are all of different patterns. (I now italicise this last sentence,—for it is the best illustration in the whole book, of the loving and religious labour on which it so frequently insists.)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [A lens of small diameter with two convex faces of different radii enclosed in a metallic tube, invented by the third Earl Stanhope (1753-1816).]

<sup>2</sup> [See above, § 12, p. 49.]

<sup>3</sup> [This was Note 4, at the end of the book, in the 1st and 2nd eds. The sentence in brackets at the end was added in the 1880 edition, in which the whole note appeared in Appendix ii., the following words introducing it and another note: "The following two notes—fourth and fifth in the old edition—are worth preserving."]









uninquiring eye ; and all its minuteness does not diminish the majesty, while it increases the mystery, of the noble and unbroken vault. It is not less the boast of some styles that they can bear ornament, than of others that they can do without it ; but we do not often enough reflect that those very styles, of so haughty simplicity, owe part of their pleasurable contrast, and would be wearisome if universal. They are but the rests and monotones of the art ; it is to its far happier, far higher, exaltation that we owe those fair fronts of variegated mosaic, charged with wild fancies and dark hosts of imagery, thicker and quainter than ever filled the depth of midsummer dream ; those vaulted gates, trellised with close leaves ; those window-labyrinths of twisted tracery and starry light ; those misty masses of multitudinous pinnacle and diademed tower ; the only witnesses, perhaps, that remain to us of the faith and fear of nations. All else for which the builders sacrificed, has passed away—all their living interests, and aims, and achievements. We know not for what they laboured, and we see no evidence of their reward. Victory, wealth, authority, happiness—all have departed, though bought by many a bitter sacrifice. But of them, and their life and their toil upon the earth, one reward, one evidence, is left to us in those gray heaps<sup>1</sup> of deep-wrought stone. They have taken with them to the grave their powers, their honours, and their errors ; but they have left us their adoration.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [The MS. shows that Ruskin here tried other words—first “eminences” and then “shadows,” before finally selecting “heaps.”]

<sup>2</sup> [With “The Lamp of Sacrifice” may be compared Wordsworth’s first sonnet on King’s College Chapel, Cambridge :—

“Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense,  
With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned—  
Albeit labouring for a scanty band  
Of white-robed Scholars only—this immense  
And glorious Work of fine intelligence !  
Give all thou canst ; high Heaven rejects the lore  
Of nicely-calculated less or more.”

Cf. also Renan’s “Prayer on the Acropolis” in his *Recollections of My Youth* (English ed., 1892, p. 52) : “What adds so much to the beauty of the buildings is their absolute honesty and the respect shown to the Divinity. The parts of the building not seen by the public are as well constructed as those which meet the eye ; and there are none of those deceptions which, in French churches more particularly, give the idea of being intended to mislead the Divinity as to the value of the offering.”]