

**RUSKIN ON EDUCATION:
SOME NEEDED BUT
NEGLECTED ELEMENTS;
RESTATED AND REVIEWED**

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William Jolly

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P R E F A C E

ONE of the most reassuring signs of the times, in this over-pushing but progressive age, is the great and growing interest manifested by all classes in the Education of the young. Remarkable, if not in many respects surprising, as have been the improvements in this all-important subject during the century, especially since the passing of the Education Acts of 1870 and 1872, our views in regard to it still urgently require enlightenment. Our present system sadly needs broadening, deepening, and elevating, in both purpose and process, more than even most experts have yet perceived or imagined.

Of men to point the way towards desirable reform, there is no one whose views should be more potential for this end than

John Ruskin. This is true of his work in Education as much as in other departments of his varied activity, in spite of existing popular and scholastic opinion in regard to his ideas. This opinion is mainly based on ignorance of the man and his views; on prejudice—both in its common acceptation and in its literal meaning of pre-judgment, condemnation without adequate examination; on the too ready acceptance of erroneous criticism, by the mass of the people, even by the more thoughtful among them; and, as he himself has told us, on the narrowing and intolerant pursuit of less worthy aims in this mammon-loving, competitive time, whose din and dust have drowned and darkened the brightest and wisest thoughts of one of the greatest prophets and preachers of our day.

In connection with Education, in spite of the facts being far otherwise, Ruskin has generally been thought to have written little, and done less, than in many other better known fields; and that little is almost universally considered to be of more extreme

and eccentric type than is usual even with this unconventional critic and philosopher. At best, his views are deemed by not a few of the more enlightened of his students as "counsels of perfection." They are certainly all this, in its truest sense, and, if listened to and acted on, would lead us, more rapidly than we have yet gone, towards the perfection which does not exist in such an advancing Science and Art as Education, of whose future developments, however, Ruskin's suggestions form a bright and encouraging vision.

The present work is a brief and partial attempt to prove this position in regard to Ruskin; by rendering more accessible and popular some of his more pregnant views regarding certain primary and pressing defects in our educational practice, than has yet been possible amid his scattered and multitudinous utterances.

Portions of the wide educational field traversed by him, I have as yet been prevented by want of time and health from overtaking—such as, the all-important and

rising function of Physical Education, now, happily, more acknowledged; the wide and ever-extending range of Intellectual Education, on which his views are advanced and valuable; and Mr. Ruskin's own practical attempts at a broader and worthier training than is yet common, which are both interesting and instructive. For these, I would at present refer those interested to the invaluable Bibliography of his works; the index to "Fors Clavigera"; Collingwood's "Life and Work of John Ruskin" (Methuen & Co., 1893); "Studies in Ruskin," by Edward T. Cook (George Allen, 1890); and "John Ruskin: his Life and Teaching," by J. Marshall Mather (third edition, 1890; Frederick Warne & Co.).

This book is the outcome of former expositions of Ruskin's views and their relations to those of other educationists, given by me from time to time: in lectures delivered to the Glasgow Ruskin Society, as President, and to the teachers of my own district, as H.M. Inspector of Schools; in a series of articles in the weekly journal,

Great Thoughts, of which this issue is mainly a reprint; and in notes buried in Educational Blue Books, which are little read even by the few whose business or studies lead them there, and are neglected by all others.

Not the least matter for personal gratification is the fact, that its present publication was arranged for, unsolicited, by Mr. Allen, whose name is so honourably identified with the artistic production of the Great Master's works.