

**THE WORKS OF JOHN RUSKIN,  
HONORARY STUDENT OF CHRIST  
CHURCH, OXFORD. VOLUME I.  
SESAME AND LILIES: THREE  
LECTURES**

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THE  
WORKS OF JOHN RUSKIN,

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VOLUME I.

SESAME AND LILIES.



GEORGE ALLEN,  
SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON, KENT.

1883.

# SESAME AND LILIES.

THREE LECTURES BY

JOHN RUSKIN, LL.D.,

HONORARY STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, HONORARY FELLOW OF CORPUS  
CHRISTI COLLEGE, AND SLADE PROFESSOR OF FINE ART, OXFORD.

1. *OF KINGS' TREASURIES.*
2. *OF QUEENS' GARDENS.*
3. *OF THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.*

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FIFTH EDITION.

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## PREFACE.

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BEING now fifty-one years old, and little likely to change my mind hereafter on any important subject of thought (unless through weakness of age), I wish to publish a connected series of such parts of my works as now seem to me right, and likely to be of permanent use. In doing so I shall omit much, but not attempt to mend what I think worth reprinting. A young man necessarily writes otherwise than an old one, and it would be worse than wasted time to try to recast the juvenile language: nor is it to be thought that I am ashamed even of what I cancel; for great part of my earlier work was rapidly written for temporary purposes, and is now unnecessary, though true, even to truism. What I wrote about religion, was, on the contrary, painstaking, and, I think, forcible, as compared with most religious writing; especially in its frankness and fearlessness: but it was wholly mistaken: for I had been educated



in the doctrines of a narrow sect, and had read history as obliquely as sectarians necessarily must.

Mingled among these either unnecessary or erroneous statements, I find, indeed, some that might be still of value; but these, in my earlier books, disfigured by affected language, partly through the desire to be thought a fine writer, and partly, as in the second volume of 'Modern Painters,' in the notion of returning as far as I could to what I thought the better style of old English literature, especially to that of my then favourite, in prose, Richard Hooker.

For these reasons, though, as respects either art, policy, or morality, as distinct from religion, I not only still hold, but would even wish strongly to re-affirm the substance of what I said in my earliest books, I shall reprint scarcely anything in this series out of the first and second volumes of 'Modern Painters'; and shall omit much of the 'Seven Lamps' and 'Stones of Venice'; but all my books written within the last fifteen years will be republished without change, as new editions of them are called for, with here and there perhaps an additional note, and having their text divided, for convenient reference, into paragraphs, consecutive through each volume. I shall also throw together the shorter fragments that bear on each other, and fill in with such unprinted lectures or studies as seem to me worth preserving, so as to keep

the volumes, on an average, composed of about a hundred leaves each.

The first book of which a new edition is required chances to be 'Sesame and Lilies,' from which I now detach the whole preface, about the Alps, for use elsewhere; and to which I add a lecture given in Ireland on a subject closely connected with that of the book itself. I am glad that it should be the first of the complete series, for many reasons; though in now looking over these two lectures, I am painfully struck by the waste of good work in them. They cost me much thought, and much strong emotion; but it was foolish to suppose that I could rouse my audiences in a little while to any sympathy with the temper into which I had brought myself by years of thinking over subjects full of pain; while, if I missed my purpose at the time, it was little to be hoped I could attain it afterwards; since phrases written for oral delivery become ineffective when quietly read. Yet I should only take away what good is in them if I tried to translate them into the language of books; nor, indeed, could I at all have done so at the time of their delivery, my thoughts then habitually and impatiently putting themselves into forms fit only for emphatic speech; and thus I am startled, in my review of them, to find that, though there is much, (forgive me the impertinence) which seems to me

accurately and energetically said, there is scarcely anything put in a form to be generally convincing, or even easily intelligible : and I can well imagine a reader laying down the book without being at all moved by it, still less guided, to any definite course of action.

I think, however, if I now say briefly and clearly what I meant my hearers to understand, and what I wanted, and still would fain have, them to do, there may afterwards be found some better service in the passionately written text.

The first lecture says, or tries to say, that, life being very short, and the quiet hours of it few, we ought to waste none of them in reading valueless books; and that valuable books should, in a civilized country, be within the reach of every one, printed in excellent form, for a just price; but not in any vile, vulgar, or, by reason of smallness of type, physically injurious form, at a vile price. For we none of us need many books, and those which we need ought to be clearly printed, on the best paper, and strongly bound. And though we are, indeed, now, a wretched and poverty-struck nation, and hardly able to keep soul and body together, still, as no person in decent circumstances would put on his table confessedly bad wine, or bad meat, without being ashamed, so he need not have on his shelves ill-printed or loosely