

**MORNINGS IN FLORENCE:
BEING SIMPLE STUDIES OF
CHRISTIAN ART FOR
ENGLISH TRAVELLERS**

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Mornings in Florence: being simple studies of Christian art for English travellers by John Ruskin

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JOHN RUSKIN

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SIMPLE STUDIES OF CHRISTIAN ART
FOR ENGLISH TRAVELLERS

BY

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PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION

It seems to me that the real duty involved in my Oxford professorship cannot be completely done by giving lectures in Oxford only, but that I ought also to give what guidance I may to travellers in Italy.

The following letters are written as I would write to any of my friends who asked me what they ought preferably to study in limited time; and I hope they may be found of use if read in the places which they describe, or before the pictures to which they refer. But in the outset let me give my readers one piece of practical advice. If you can afford it, pay your custode or sacristan well. You may think it an injustice to the next comer; but your paying him ill is an injustice to *all* comers, for the necessary result of your doing so is that he will lock up or cover whatever he can, that he may get his penny fee for showing it; and that, thus exacting a small tax from everybody, he is thankful to none, and gets into a sullen passion if you stay more than a quarter of a minute to look at the

object after it is uncovered. And you will not find it possible to examine anything properly under these circumstances. Pay your sacristan well, and make friends with him : in nine cases out of ten an Italian is really grateful for the money, and more than grateful for human courtesy ; and will give you some true zeal and kindly feeling in return for a franc and a pleasant look. How very horrid of him to be grateful for money, you think ! Well, I can only tell you that I know fifty people who will write me letters full of tender sentiment, for one who will give me tenpence ; and I shall be very much obliged to you if you will give me tenpence for each of these letters of mine, though I have done more work than you [will ever] know of, to make them good ten-penny-worths to you.

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MORNINGS IN FLORENCE

THE FIRST MORNING

SANTA CROCE

1. IF there be one artist, more than another, whose work it is desirable that you should examine in Florence, supposing that you care for old art at all, it is Giotto. You can, indeed, also see work of his at Assisi; but it is not likely you will stop there, to any purpose. At Padua there is much; but only of one period. At Florence, which is his birthplace, you can see pictures by him of every date, and every kind. But you had surely better see, first, what is of his best time and of the best kind. He painted very small pictures and very large—painted from the age of twelve to sixty—painted some subjects carelessly which he had little interest in—others, carefully with all his heart. You would surely like, and it would certainly be wise, to see him first in his strong and earnest work,—to see a painting by him, if possible, of large size, and wrought with

his full strength, and of a subject pleasing to him. And if it were, also, a subject interesting to you yourself,—better still.

2. Now, if indeed you are interested in old art, you cannot but know the power of the thirteenth century. You know that the character of it was concentrated in, and to the full expressed by, its best king, St. Louis. You know St. Louis was a Franciscan; and that the Franciscans, for whom Giotto was continually painting under Dante's advice, were prouder of him than of any other of their royal brethren or sisters. If Giotto ever would imagine anybody with care and delight, it would be St. Louis, if it chanced that anywhere he had St. Louis to paint.

Also, you know that he was appointed to build the Campanile of the Duomo, because he was then the best master of sculpture, painting, and architecture in Florence, and supposed in such business to be without superior in the world.* And that this commission was given him late in life, (of course he could not have designed the Campanile when he was a boy;) so therefore, if you find any of his figures niched under pure campanile architecture, and the architecture by his hand, you

* "Cum in universo orbe non reperiri dicatur quonquam qui sufficientior sit in his et aliis multis artibus magistro Giotto Bondonis de Florentiâ pictore, et accipiendus sit in patriâ, velut magnus magister."—(Decree of his appointment, quoted by Lord Lindsay, vol. ii., p. 247.)