

VERONA AND OTHER LECTURES

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Verona and Other Lectures by John Ruskin

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JOHN RUSKIN

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BY

JOHN RUSKIN, D.C.L., LL.D.

HONORARY STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, HONORARY FELLOW OF CORPUS
CHRISTI COLLEGE, AND SOMETIME SLADE PROFESSOR OF
FINE ART IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

1819-1900

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR*

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION.

OF the five chapters in this volume, the first three belong to the year 1870; the last two date from 1882-1885. Three out of the five chapters have been read as lectures; and one of the others was meant for delivery at Oxford, though it was replaced, in fact, by a different discourse. Since the latest in date, chapter IV., was written, the Author has not spoken in public; but this paper, "Candida Casa," is sufficiently like the rest in form, and closely enough connected with the course on "The Pleasures of England," to justify the general title of the volume—"Verona, and other Lectures."

I. The first, at the time of its delivery, was called "A Talk respecting Verona, and its Rivers." It was given at the Royal Institution shortly after the Author's return, on his election to the Slade Professorship, from a stay of some months at

Venice and Verona, where he had been studying early architecture, and making careful sketches of buildings which at that time were threatened with imminent "restoration." On the occasion of the lecture, he exhibited a series of fifty mounts of drawings and photographs, illustrating the subject, of which some twenty were his own work, though not all done in that summer of 1869. The rest were by his assistants, Mr. Arthur Burgess and Mr. John W. Bunney; with the well-known pencil drawing by Prout of the Tomb of Can Signorio, and some photographs specially taken from architectural details, and from pictures by the great masters of whom he made mention. As one of "the Masters," Carpaccio here appeared for the first time in Mr. Ruskin's writings; Sandro Botticelli still remained to be rated as a star of the first magnitude, on the exhibition, soon afterwards, of his Nativity, now in the National Gallery. A full and annotated catalogue of this little exhibition is given in "On the Old Road" (vol. I. pp. 665-673): and some of the drawings, with others relating to the subject, are now reproduced as illustrations to this volume.

This lecture was reported very briefly in the Proceedings of the Royal Institution, vol. VI. p. 55; reprinted in "On the Old Road," vol. I. p. 654. A much fuller report was given by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and republished in the magazine *Igdrasil*, vol. III. No. 16; also reprinted privately in a volume entitled "Ruskiniana." The text now given is complete, from the original fair copy of the manuscript, and it contains much characteristic matter not represented in the reports, or else dulled by alteration of the lecturer's lively phrasing into journalistic *oratio obliqua*. The fact, however, that it had been so reported, and also that the subject did not fit into any of the volumes which the Author was then busy in bringing out, will account for the suppression of the "Verona" during so many years, and for its appearance at last in this miscellany.

In connection with the closing topic of this lecture, the control of irrigation and inundation, Mr. Ruskin was afterwards drawn into correspondence in the newspapers; and he explained his plans more fully in words which some readers may like to see quoted at length. In this lec-

ture on Verona, he said, "My principal object was to state the causes of the incalculably destructive inundations of the Rhone, Toccia, and Ticino, in 1868; and to point out that no mountain river ever was or can be successfully embanked in the valleys; but that the rainfall must be arrested on the high and softly rounded hill surfaces, before it reaches any ravine in which its force can be concentrated. Every mountain farm ought to have a dyke about two feet high — with a small ditch within it — carried at intervals in regular, scarcely perceptible incline, across its fields; — with discharge into a reservoir large enough to contain a week's maximum rainfall on the area of that farm in the stormiest weather — the higher uncultivated land being guarded over larger spaces with bolder embankments. No drop of water that had once touched hill ground ought ever to reach the plains till it was wanted there: and the maintenance of the bank and reservoir, once built, on any farm, would not cost more than the keeping up of its cattle-sheds against chance of whirlwind and snow. The first construction of the work would be

costly enough; and, say the Economists, 'would not pay.' I never heard of any National Defences that did! . . . But my low embankments would not depend for their utility on the advent of a hypothetical foe, but would have to contend with an instant and inevitable one; yet with one who is only an adversary if unresisted; who, resisted, becomes a faithful friend—a lavish benefactor."¹

Shortly afterwards the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent at Rome wrote that a former letter had been translated into Italian, and had set people thinking; and he asked Mr. Ruskin to state the case once more. On which Mr. Ruskin wrote two additional letters to the *Daily Telegraph*, the second of which recites his experiences and observations of flood and drought in Italy, and concludes thus:—

"If money were all that is needed, do we in England owe so little to Italy of delight that we cannot so much as lend her spades and pickaxes at her need? . . . But she does not need us.

¹ *Pall Mall Gazette*, Jan. 19, 1871: ("Arrows of the Chace," vol. II. p. 162.)