

**ARIADNE FLORENTINA. SIX
LECTURES ON WOOD AND METAL
ENGRAVING. GIVEN BEFORE THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, IN
MICHAELMAS TERM, 1872**

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Ariadne Florentina. Six Lectures on Wood and Metal Engraving. Given before the University of Oxford, in Michaelmas Term, 1872 by John Ruskin

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JOHN RUSKIN

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Minnie Bann
from N. C.

Dec. 25, 1855.

ARIADNE FLORENTINA.

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SIX LECTURES

ON

WOOD AND METAL ENGRAVING.

GIVEN BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
IN MICHAELMAS TERM, 1872.

BY

JOHN RUSKIN, LL.D.,

HONORARY STUDENT OF CHRISTCHURCH, AND SLADE PROFESSOR
OF FINE ART.

- I.—DEFINITION OF THE ART OF ENGRAVING.
II.—THE RELATION OF ENGRAVING TO OTHER ARTS IN FLORENCE
III.—THE TECHNIQS OF WOOD ENGRAVING.

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ARIADNE FLORENTINA.

SIX LECTURES

ON

WOOD AND METAL ENGRAVING.

LECTURE I.

DEFINITION OF THE ART OF ENGRAVING.

1. THE entrance on my duty for to-day begins the fourth year of my official work in Oxford; and I doubt not that some of my audience are asking themselves, very doubtfully—at all events, I ask myself, very anxiously—what has been done.

For practical result, I have not much to show. I announced, a fortnight since, that I would meet, the day before yesterday, any gentleman who wished to attend this course for purposes of study. My class, so minded, numbers four, of whom three wish to be artists, and ought not therefore, by rights, to be at Oxford at all; and the fourth is the last remaining unit of the class I had last year.

2. Yet I neither in this reproach myself, nor, if I could,

would I reproach the students who are not here. I do not reproach myself; for it was impossible for me to attend properly to the schools and to write the grammar for them at the same time; and I do not blame the absent students for not attending a school from which I have generally been absent myself. In all this, there is much to be mended, but, in true light, nothing to be regretted.

I say, I had to write my school grammar. These three volumes of lectures under my hand,* contain, carefully set down, the things I want you first to know. None of my writings are done fluently; the second volume of *Modern Painters* was all of it written twice—most of it, four times,—over; and these lectures have been written, I don't know how many times. You may think that this was done merely in an author's vanity, not in a tutor's care. To the vanity I plead guilty,—no man is more intensely vain than I am; but my vanity is set on having it *known* of me that I am a good master, not in having it *said* of me that I am a smooth author. My vanity is never more wounded than in being called a fine writer, meaning—that nobody need mind what I say.

3. Well, then, besides this vanity, I have some solicitude for your progress. You may give me credit for it or not, as you choose, but it is sincere. And that your advance may be safe, I have taken the best pains I could in laying down laws for it. In these three years I have got my gram-

* Inaugural series, *Aratra Pentelici*, and *Eagle's Nest*.

mar written, and, with the help of many friends, all working instruments in good order; and now we will try what we can do. Not that, even now, you are to depend on my presence with you in personal teaching. I shall henceforward think of the lectures less, of the schools more; but my best work for the schools will often be by drawing in Florence or in Lancashire—not here.

4. I have already told you several times that the course through which I mean every student in these schools should pass, is one which shall enable them to understand the elementary principles of the finest art. It will necessarily be severe, and seem to lead to no immediate result. Some of you will, on the contrary, wish to be taught what is immediately easy, and gives prospect of a manifest success.

But suppose they should come to the Professor of Logic and Rhetoric, and tell him they wanted to be taught to preach like Mr. Spurgeon, or the Bishop of ———.

He would say to them,—I cannot, and if I could I would not, tell you how to preach like Mr. Spurgeon, or the Bishop of ———. Your own character will form your style; your own zeal will direct it; your own obstinacy or ignorance may limit or exaggerate it; but my business is to prevent, as far as I can, your having *any* particular style; and to teach you the laws of all language, and the essential power of your own.

In like manner, this course, which I propose to you in art, will be calculated only to give you judgment and method in future study, to establish to your conviction the

laws of general art, and to enable you to draw, if not with genius, at least with sense and propriety.

The course, so far as it consists in practice, will be defined in my Instructions for the schools. And the theory connected with that practice is set down in the three lectures at the end of the first course I delivered—those on Line, Light, and Colour.

You will have, therefore, to get this book,* and it is the only one which you will need to have of your own,—the others are placed, for reference, where they will be accessible to you.

5. In the 139th paragraph, p. 132, it states the order of your practical study in these terms:

“I wish you to begin by getting command of line;—that is to say, by learning to draw a steady line, limiting with absolute correctness the form or space you intend it to limit; to proceed by getting command over flat tints, so that you may be able to fill the spaces you have enclosed evenly, either with shade or colour, according to the school you adopt; and, finally, to obtain the power of adding such fineness of drawing, within the masses, as shall express their undulation, and their characters of form and texture.”

And now, since in your course of practice you are first required to attain the power of drawing lines accurately and delicately, so in the course of theory, or grammar, I

* My inaugural series of seven lectures, published at the Clarendon Press.