

**MORNINGS IN FLORENCE: BEING  
SIMPLE STUDIES OF CHRISTIAN  
ART, FOR ENGLISH TRAVELLERS;  
II. THE GOLDEN GATE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649168897

Mornings in Florence: being simple studies of christian art, for english travellers; II. The Golden gate by John Ruskin

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**JOHN RUSKIN**

**MORNINGS IN FLORENCE: BEING  
SIMPLE STUDIES OF CHRISTIAN  
ART, FOR ENGLISH TRAVELLERS;  
II. THE GOLDEN GATE**



MORNINGS IN FLORENCE.



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

BY  
JOHN RUSKIN, LL.D.,  
HONORARY STUDENT OF CRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,  
AND HONORARY FELLOW OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE.

II  
*THE GOLDEN GATE.*

SECOND EDITION.

GEORGE ALLEN,  
SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON, KENT.

1881.



---

Hasell, Watson, and Vinsy, Printers, London and Aylesbury.



## THE SECOND MORNING.

### THE GOLDEN GATE.

TO-DAY, as early as you please, and at all events before doing anything else, let us go to Giotto's own parish-church, Santa Maria Novella. If, walking from the Strozzi Palace, you look on your right for the 'Way of the Beautiful Ladies,' it will take you quickly there.

Do not let anything in the way of acquaintance, sacristan, or chance sight, stop you in doing what I tell you. Walk straight up the church, into the apse of it;—(you may let your eyes rest, as you walk, on the glow of its glass, only mind the stop, half-way;—and lift the curtain; and go in behind the grand marble altar, giving anybody who follows you anything they want, to hold their tongues, or go away.

You know, most probably, already, that the frescos on each side of you are Ghirlandajo's. You have been told they are very fine, and if you know anything of painting, you know the portraits in them are so. Nevertheless, somehow, you don't really enjoy these frescos, nor come often here, do you?

The reason of which is, that if you are a nice person, they are not nice enough for you; and if a vulgar person, not vulgar enough. But, if you are a nice person, I want you to look carefully, to-day, at the two lowest, next the windows, for a few minutes, that you may better feel the art you are really to study, by its contrast with these.

On your left hand is represented the birth of the Virgin. On your right, her meeting with Elizabeth.

You can't easily see better pieces—(nowhere more pompous pieces)—of flat goldsmith's work. Ghirlandajo was to the end of his life a mere goldsmith, with a gift of portraiture. And here he has done his best, and has put a long wall in wonderful perspective, and the whole city of Florence behind Elizabeth's house in the hill-country; and a splendid bas-relief, in the style of Luca della Robbia, in St. Anne's bedroom; and he has carved all the pilasters, and embroidered all the dresses, and flourished and trumpeted into every corner; and it is all done, within just a point, as well as it can be done; and quite as well as Ghirlandajo could do it. But the point in which it *just* misses being as well as it can be done, is the vital point. And it is all simply—good for nothing.

Extricate yourself from the goldsmith's rubbish of it, and look full at the Salutation. You will

say, perhaps, at first, 'What grand and graceful figures!' Are you sure they are graceful? Look again, and you will see their draperies hang from them exactly as they would from two clothes-pegs. Now, fine drapery, really well drawn, as it hangs from a clothes-peg, is always rather impressive, especially if it be disposed in large breadths and deep folds; but that is the only grace of their figures.

Secondly. Look at the Madonna, carefully. You will find she is not the least meek—only stupid,—as all the other women in the picture are.

'St. Elizabeth, you think, is nice'? Yes; 'And she says, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" really with a great deal of serious feeling'? Yes, with a great deal. Well, you have looked enough at those two. Now—just for another minute—look at the birth of the Virgin. 'A most graceful group, (your Murray's Guide tells you,) in the attendant servants.' Extremely so. Also, the one holding the child is rather pretty. Also, the servant pouring out the water does it from a great height, without splashing, most cleverly. Also, the lady coming to ask for St. Anne, and see the baby, walks majestically, and is very finely dressed. And as for that bas-relief in the style of Luca della Robbia, you might really almost think it *was* Luca! The very best plated goods, Master