

**READINGS IN JOHN
RUSKIN'S FORS
CLAVIGERA 1871-1884**

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Readings in John Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera* 1871-1884 by John Ruskin & Caroline A. Wurtzburg

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JOHN RUSKIN & CAROLINE A. WURTZBURG

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IN
JOHN RUSKIN'S
FORS CLAVIGERA
1871-1884

THIRD THOUSAND

LONDON
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1902
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PREFACE

THIS series of passages from 'Fors Clavigera' has been compiled with the aim of opening its message to all sorts and conditions of men for whom it may be practically inaccessible by reason of its difficulty, length, and costliness. The workers here addressed, and many genuine students of the master, are often poor, un leisured, unlettered. They are the "little ones" of wisdom; they have not won strength to overcome, patience to endure, power to rule fortune, like the three 'Fors' heroes.

And those readers also within whose reach the whole book lies, may, like myself, find much advantage in having its essential and permanent elements sifted, separated, and summed up, and so made to stand out in stronger relief. If ever selection is to be justified, surely it is here. The ninety-six Letters cover a period of thirteen years (1871-1884), and deal with an immense range of subjects and interests; they were written in many places and many moods, sometimes under severest strain, and composed in a style which holds the solid purpose of the author, as it were, in solution, while they are still further complicated by the practical experiment in which he sought to embody his scheme of social reform. It is a literature rather than a book, the 'Confessions' of a man of genius as well as 'Letters to Workmen.' All these strange characteristics constitute its rare

quality and charm for lovers of literature and of the master, but we cannot afford to relegate this unique work to the curious in things literary or the indiscriminating 'Ruskinian.' The influence of Ruskin's life and work culminates in his social teaching, and of that teaching 'Fors Clavigera' is the crown and climax. It completes his development from the art-critic to the critic of life, drawing to a focus his radiant wisdom and the Christ-like love of men, which

"White of heat, awakes to flame."

Without it the student cannot thoroughly grasp his system, nor perceive the unity underlying his life, thought, and conduct. And above all, this—the last of his five chief works, as he himself counts them—is indispensable for the workers and the thinkers, those who are in travail for that new birth of society of which it is at once a prophecy and a sign.

I have tried to set aside everything except the directly ethical or social teaching, to keep on the whole to principles, avoiding applications and illustrations; the story of St. George's Company, and much besides of deep interest or beauty, is therefore passed over. But this little volume does not claim to represent the cream of the bowl; its purpose will best be fulfilled if the nature of its contents—fragmentary though 'more golden than gold'—should make the reader go seek for himself in the treasury out of which they have been collected.

CAROLINE A. WURTZBURG.

SCARBOROUGH, *July* 1899.

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THE ST. GEORGE'S CREED

I. I trust in the Living God, Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things and creatures visible and invisible.

I trust in the kindness of His law, and the goodness of His work.

And I will strive to love Him, and keep His law, and see His work, while I live.

II. I trust in the nobleness of human nature, in the majesty of its faculties, the fulness of its mercy, and the joy of its love.

And I will strive to love my neighbour as myself, and, even when I cannot, will act as if I did.

III. I will labour, with such strength and opportunity as God gives me, for my own daily bread; and all that my hand finds to do, I will do with my might.

IV. I will not deceive, or cause to be deceived, any human being for my gain or pleasure; nor hurt, or cause to be hurt, any human being for my gain or pleasure; nor rob, or cause to be robbed, any human being for my gain or pleasure.

V. I will not kill nor hurt any living creature needlessly, nor destroy any beautiful thing, but will strive to save and comfort all gentle life, and guard and perfect all natural beauty, upon the earth.

VI. I will strive to raise my own body and soul daily into higher powers of duty and happiness; not in rivalry or contention with others, but for the help, delight, and honour of others, and for the joy and peace of my own life.

VII. I will obey all the laws of my country faithfully; and the orders of its monarch, and of all persons appointed to be in authority under its monarch, so far as such laws or commands are consistent with what I suppose to be the law of God; and when they are not, or seem in anywise to need change, I will oppose them loyally and deliberately, not with malicious, concealed, or disorderly violence.

VIII. And with the same faithfulness, and under the limits of the same obedience, which I render to the laws of my country, and the commands of its rulers, I will obey the laws of the Society called of St. George, into which I am this day received; and the orders of its masters, and of all persons appointed to be in authority under its masters, so long as I remain a Companion, called of St. George. (*Letter 58*)