

RUSKIN JOHN

THE

PLEASURES OF

ENGLAND

John Ruskin
The Pleasures of England

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The Pleasures of England / Lectures given in Oxford:*

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LECTURE I.

THE PLEASURES OF LEARNING

Bertha to Osburga

In the short review of the present state of English Art, given you last year, I left necessarily many points untouched, and others unexplained. The seventh lecture, which I did not think it necessary to read aloud, furnished you with some of the corrective statements of which, whether spoken or not, it was extremely desirable that you should estimate the balancing weight. These I propose in the present course farther to illustrate, and to arrive with you at, I hope, a just—you would not wish it to be a flattering—estimate of the conditions of our English artistic life, past and present, in order that with due allowance for them we may determine, with some security, what those of us who have faculty ought to do, and those who have sensibility,

to admire.

2. In thus rightly doing and feeling, you will find summed a wider duty, and granted a greater power, than the moral philosophy at this moment current with you has ever conceived; and a prospect opened to you besides, of such a Future for England as you may both hopefully and proudly labour for with your hands, and those of you who are spared to the ordinary term of human life, even see with your eyes, when all this tumult of vain avarice and idle pleasure, into which you have been plunged at birth, shall have passed into its appointed perdition.

3. I wish that you would read for introduction to the lectures I have this year arranged for you, that on the Future of England, which I gave to the cadets at Woolwich in the first year of my Professorship here, 1869; and which is now placed as the main conclusion of the "Crown of Wild Olive": and with it, very attentively, the close of my inaugural lecture given here; for the matter, no less than the tenor of which, I was reproved by all my friends, as irrelevant and ill-judged;—which, nevertheless, is of all the pieces of teaching I have ever given from this chair, the most pregnant and essential to whatever studies, whether of Art or Science, you may pursue, in this place or elsewhere, during your lives.

The opening words of that passage I will take leave to read to you again,—for they must still be the ground of whatever help I can give you, worth your acceptance.

"There is a destiny now possible to us—the highest ever

set before a nation to be accepted or refused. We are still undegenerate in race: a race mingled of the best northern blood. We are not yet dissolute in temper, but still have the firmness to govern, and the grace to obey. We have been taught a religion of pure mercy, which we must either now finally betray, or learn to defend by fulfilling. And we are rich in an inheritance of honour, bequeathed to us through a thousand years of noble history, which it should be our daily thirst to increase with splendid avarice; so that Englishmen, if it be a sin to covet honour, should be the most offending souls alive. Within the last few years we have had the laws of natural science opened to us with a rapidity which has been blinding by its brightness; and means of transit and communication given to us, which have made but one kingdom of the habitable globe.

"One kingdom;—but who is to be its king? Is there to be no king in it, think you, and every man to do that which is right in his own eyes? Or only kings of terror, and the obscene empires of Mammon and Belial? Or will you, youths of England, make your country again a royal throne of kings; a sceptred isle; for all the world a source of light, a centre of peace; mistress of Learning and of the Arts;—faithful guardian of great memories in the midst of irreverent and ephemeral visions—faithful servant of time-tried principles, under temptation from fond experiments and licentious desires; and amidst the cruel and clamorous jealousies of the nations, worshipped in her strange valour, of goodwill towards men?"

The fifteen years that have passed since I spoke these words must, I think, have convinced some of my immediate hearers that the need for such an appeal was more pressing than they then imagined;—while they have also more and more convinced me myself that the ground I took for it was secure, and that the youths and girls now entering on the duties of active life are able to accept and fulfil the hope I then held out to them.

In which assurance I ask them to-day to begin the examination with me, very earnestly, of the question laid before you in that seventh of my last year's lectures, whether London, as it is now, be indeed the natural, and therefore the heaven-appointed outgrowth of the inhabitation, these 1800 years, of the valley of the Thames by a progressively instructed and disciplined people; or if not, in what measure and manner the aspect and spirit of the great city may be possibly altered by your acts and thoughts.

In my introduction to the Economist of Xenophon I said that every fairly educated European boy or girl ought to learn the history of five cities,—Athens, Rome, Venice, Florence, and London; that of London including, or at least compelling in parallel study, knowledge also of the history of Paris.

A few words are enough to explain the reasons for this choice. The history of Athens, rightly told, includes all that need be known of Greek religion and arts; that of Rome, the victory of Christianity over Paganism; those of Venice and Florence sum the essential facts respecting the Christian arts of Painting, Sculpture, and Music; and that of London, in her sisterhood with

Paris, the development of Christian Chivalry and Philosophy, with their exponent art of Gothic architecture.

Without the presumption of forming a distinct design, I yet hoped at the time when this division of study was suggested, with the help of my pupils, to give the outlines of their several histories during my work in Oxford. Variously disappointed and arrested, alike by difficulties of investigation and failure of strength, I may yet hope to lay down for you, beginning with your own metropolis, some of the lines of thought in following out which such a task might be most effectively accomplished.

You observe that I speak of architecture as the chief exponent of the feelings both of the French and English races. Together with it, however, most important evidence of character is given by the illumination of manuscripts, and by some forms of jewellery and metallurgy: and my purpose in this course of lectures is to illustrate by all these arts the phases of national character which it is impossible that historians should estimate, or even observe, with accuracy, unless they are cognizant of excellence in the aforesaid modes of structural and ornamental craftsmanship.

In one respect, as indicated by the title chosen for this course, I have varied the treatment of their subject from that adopted in all my former books. Hitherto, I have always endeavoured to illustrate the personal temper and skill of the artist; holding the wishes or taste of his spectators at small account, and saying of Turner you ought to like him, and of Salvator, you ought not, etc.,

etc., without in the least considering what the genius or instinct of the spectator might otherwise demand, or approve. But in the now attempted sketch of Christian history, I have approached every question from the people's side, and examined the nature, not of the special faculties by which the work was produced, but of the general instinct by which it was asked for, and enjoyed. Therefore I thought the proper heading for these papers should represent them as descriptive of the *Pleasures* of England, rather than of its *Arts*.

And of these pleasures, necessarily, the leading one was that of Learning, in the sense of receiving instruction;—a pleasure totally separate from that of finding out things for yourself,—and an extremely sweet and sacred pleasure, when you know how to seek it, and receive.

On which I am the more disposed, and even compelled, here to insist, because your modern ideas of Development imply that you must all turn out what you are to be, and find out what you are to know, for yourselves, by the inevitable operation of your anterior affinities and inner consciences:—whereas the old idea of education was that the baby material of you, however accidentally or inevitably born, was at least to be by external force, and ancestral knowledge, bred; and treated by its Fathers and Tutors as a plastic vase, to be shaped or mannered as *they* chose, not as *it* chose, and filled, when its form was well finished and baked, with sweetness of sound doctrine, as with Hybla honey, or Arabian spikenard.

Without debating how far these two modes of acquiring knowledge—finding out, and being told—may severally be good, and in perfect instruction combined, I have to point out to you that, broadly, Athens, Rome, and Florence are self-taught, and internally developed; while all the Gothic races, without any exception, but especially those of London and Paris, are afterwards taught by these; and had, therefore, when they chose to accept it, the delight of being instructed, without trouble or doubt, as fast as they could read or imitate; and brought forward to the point where their own northern instincts might wholesomely superimpose or graft some national ideas upon these sound instructions. Read over what I said on this subject in the third of my lectures last year (page 79), and simplify that already brief statement further, by fastening in your mind Carlyle's general symbol of the best attainments of northern religious sculpture,—“three whalecubs combined by boiling,” and reflecting that the mental history of all northern European art is the modification of that graceful type, under the orders of the Athena of Homer and Phidias.

And this being quite indisputably the broad fact of the matter, I greatly marvel that your historians never, so far as I have read, think of proposing to you the question—what you might have made of yourselves *without* the help of Homer and Phidias: what sort of beings the Saxon and the Celt, the Frank and the Dane, might have been by this time, untouched by the spear of Pallas, unrul'd by the rod of Agricola, and sincerely the native growth,

pure of root, and ungrafted in fruit of the clay of Isis, rock of Dovrefeldt, and sands of Elbe? Think of it, and think chiefly what form the ideas, and images, of your natural religion might probably have taken, if no Roman missionary had ever passed the Alps in charity, and no English king in pilgrimage.

I have been of late indebted more than I can express to the friend who has honoured me by the dedication of his recently published lectures on 'Older England;' and whose eager enthusiasm and far collected learning have enabled me for the first time to assign their just meaning and value to the ritual and imagery of Saxon devotion. But while every page of Mr. Hodgett's book, and, I may gratefully say also, every sentence of his teaching, has increased and justified the respect in which I have always been by my own feeling disposed to hold the mythologies founded on the love and knowledge of the natural world, I have also been led by them to conceive, far more forcibly than hitherto, the power which the story of Christianity possessed, first heard through the wreaths of that cloudy superstition, in the substitution, for its vaporescent allegory, of a positive and literal account of a real Creation, and an instantly present, omnipresent, and compassionate God.

Observe, there is no question whatever in examining this influence, how far Christianity itself is true, or the transcendental doctrines of it intelligible. Those who brought you the story of it believed it with all their souls to be true,—and the effect of it on the hearts of your ancestors was that of an unquestionable,

infinitely lucid message straight from God, doing away with all difficulties, grief, and fears for those who willingly received it, nor by any, except wilfully and obstinately vile persons, to be, by any possibility, denied or refused.

And it was precisely, observe, the vivacity and joy with which the main fact of Christ's life was accepted which gave the force and wrath to the controversies instantly arising about its nature.

Those controversies vexed and shook, but never undermined, the faith they strove to purify, and the miraculous presence, errorless precept, and loving promises of their Lord were alike undoubted, alike rejoiced in, by every nation that heard the word of Apostles. The Pelagian's assertion that immortality could be won by man's will, and the Arian's that Christ possessed no more than man's nature, never for an instant—or in any country—hindered the advance of the moral law and intellectual hope of Christianity. Far the contrary; the British heresy concerning Free Will, though it brought bishop after bishop into England to extinguish it, remained an extremely healthy and active element in the British mind down to the days of John Bunyan and the guide Great Heart, and the calmly Christian justice and simple human virtue of Theodoric were the very roots and first burgeons of the regeneration of Italy.¹ But of the degrees in which it was

¹ Gibbon, in his 37th chapter, makes Ulphilas also an Arian, but might have forborne, with grace, his own definition of orthodoxy:—and you are to observe generally that at this time the teachers who admitted the inferiority of Christ to the Father as touching his Manhood, were often counted among Arians, but quite falsely. Christ's own words, "My Father is greater than I," end that controversy at once. Arianism consists not in

possible for any barbarous nation to receive during the first five centuries, either the spiritual power of Christianity itself, or the instruction in classic art and science which accompanied it, you cannot rightly judge, without taking the pains, and they will not, I think, be irksome, of noticing carefully, and fixing permanently in your minds, the separating characteristics of the greater races, both in those who learned and those who taught.

Of the Huns and Vandals we need not speak. They are merely forms of Punishment and Destruction. Put them out of your minds altogether, and remember only the names of the immortal nations, which abide on their native rocks, and plough their unconquered plains, at this hour.

Briefly, in the north,—Briton, Norman, Frank, Saxon, Ostrogoth, Lombard; briefly, in the south,—Tuscan, Roman, Greek, Syrian, Egyptian, Arabian.

Now of these races, the British (I avoid the word Celtic, because you would expect me to say Keltic; and I don't mean to, lest you should be wanting me next to call the patroness of music St. Kekilia), the British, including Breton, Cornish, Welsh, Irish, Scot, and Pict, are, I believe, of all the northern races, the one which has deepest love of external nature;—and the richest inherent gift of pure music and song, as such; separated from the intellectual gift which raises song into poetry. They are naturally also religious, and for some centuries after their own conversion are one of the chief evangelizing powers in

asserting the subjection of the Son to the Father, but in denying the subjected Divinity.

Christendom. But they are neither apprehensive nor receptive;—they cannot understand the classic races, and learn scarcely anything from them; perhaps better so, if the classic races had been more careful to understand *them*.

Next, the Norman is scarcely more apprehensive than the Celt, but he is more constructive, and uses to good advantage what he learns from the Frank. His main characteristic is an energy, which never exhausts itself in vain anger, desire, or sorrow, but abides and rules, like a living rock:—where he wanders, he flows like lava, and congeals like granite.

Next, I take in this first sketch the Saxon and Frank together, both pre-eminently apprehensive, both docile exceedingly, imaginative in the highest, but in life active more than pensive, eager in desire, swift of invention, keenly sensitive to animal beauty, but with difficulty rational, and rarely, for the future, wise. Under the conclusive name of Ostrogoth, you may class whatever tribes are native to Central Germany, and develop themselves, as time goes on, into that power of the German Cæsars which still asserts itself as an empire against the licence and insolence of modern republicanism,—of which races, though this general name, no description can be given in rapid terms.

And lastly, the Lombards, who, at the time we have to deal with, were sternly indocile, gloomily imaginative,—of almost Norman energy, and differing from all the other western nations chiefly in this notable particular, that while the Celt is capable

of bright wit and happy play, and the Norman, Saxon, and Frank all alike delight in caricature, the Lombards, like the Arabians, never jest.

These, briefly, are the six barbaric nations who are to be taught: and of whose native arts and faculties, before they receive any tutorship from the south, I find no well-sifted account in any history:—but thus much of them, collecting your own thoughts and knowledge, you may easily discern—they were all, with the exception of the Scots, practical workers and builders in wood; and those of them who had coasts, first rate sea-boat builders, with fine mathematical instincts and practice in that kind far developed, necessarily good sail-weaving, and sound fur-stitching, with stout iron-work of nail and rivet; rich copper and some silver work in decoration—the Celts developing peculiar gifts in linear design, but wholly incapable of drawing animals or figures;—the Saxons and Franks having enough capacity in that kind, but no thought of attempting it; the Normans and Lombards still farther remote from any such skill. More and more, it seems to me wonderful that under your British block-temple, grimly extant on its pastoral plain, or beside the first crosses engraved on the rock at Whithorn—you English and Scots do not oftener consider what you might or could have come to, left to yourselves.

Next, let us form the list of your tutor nations, in whom, it generally pleases you to look at nothing but the corruptions. If we could get into the habit of thinking more of our own corruptions

and more of *their* virtues, we should have a better chance of learning the true laws alike of art and destiny. But, the safest way of all, is to assure ourselves that true knowledge of any thing or any creature is only of the good of it; that its nature and life are in that, and that what is diseased,—that is to say, unnatural and mortal,—you must cut away from it in contemplation, as you would in surgery.

Of the six tutor nations, two, the Tuscan and Arab, have no effect on early Christian England. But the Roman, Greek, Syrian, and Egyptian act together from the earliest times; you are to study the influence of Rome upon England in Agricola, Constantius, St. Benedict, and St. Gregory; of Greece upon England in the artists of Byzantium and Ravenna; of Syria and Egypt upon England in St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, and St. Athanase.

St. Jerome, in central Bethlehem; St. Augustine, Carthaginian by birth, in truth a converted Tyrian, Athanase, Egyptian, symmetric and fixed as an Egyptian aisle; Chrysostom, golden mouth of all; these are, indeed, every one teachers of all the western world, but St. Augustine especially of lay, as distinguished from monastic, Christianity to the Franks, and finally to us. His rule, expanded into the treatise of the City of God, is taken for guide of life and policy by Charlemagne, and becomes certainly the fountain of Evangelical Christianity, distinctively so called, (and broadly the lay Christianity of Europe, since, in the purest form of it, that is to say, the

most merciful, charitable, variously applicable, kindly wise.) The greatest type of it, as far as I know, St. Martin of Tours, whose character is sketched, I think in the main rightly, in the Bible of Amiens; and you may bind together your thoughts of its course by remembering that Alcuin, born at York, dies in the Abbey of St. Martin, at Tours; that as St. Augustine was in his writings Charlemagne's Evangelist in faith, Alcuin was, in living presence, his master in rhetoric, logic, and astronomy, with the other physical sciences.

A hundred years later than St. Augustine, comes the rule of St. Benedict—the Monastic rule, virtually, of European Christianity, ever since—and theologically the Law of Works, as distinguished from the Law of Faith. St. Augustine and all the disciples of St. Augustine tell Christians what they should feel and think: St. Benedict and all the disciples of St. Benedict tell Christians what they should say and do.

In the briefest, but also the perfectest distinction, the disciples of St. Augustine are those who open the door to Christ—"If any man hear my voice"; but the Benedictines those to whom Christ opens the door—"To him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Now, note broadly the course and action of this rule, as it combines with the older one. St. Augustine's, accepted heartily by Clovis, and, with various degrees of understanding, by the kings and queens of the Merovingian dynasty, makes seemingly little difference in their conduct, so that their profession of it remains a scandal to Christianity to this day; and yet it lives, in

the true hearts among them, down from St. Clotilde to her great grand-daughter Bertha, who in becoming Queen of Kent, builds under its chalk downs her own little chapel to St. Martin, and is the first effectively and permanently useful missionary to the Saxons, the beginner of English Erudition,—the first laid corner stone of beautiful English character.

I think henceforward you will find the memorandum of dates which I have here set down for my own guidance more simply useful than those confused by record of unimportant persons and inconsequent events, which form the indices of common history.

From the year of the Saxon invasion 449, there are exactly 400 years to the birth of Alfred, 849. You have no difficulty in remembering those cardinal years. Then, you have Four great men and great events to remember, at the close of the fifth century. Clovis, and the founding of Frank Kingdom; Theodoric and the founding of the Gothic Kingdom; Justinian and the founding of Civil law; St. Benedict and the founding of Religious law.

Of, Justinian, and his work, I am not able myself to form any opinion—and it is, I think, unnecessary for students of history to form any, until they are able to estimate clearly the benefits, and mischief, of the civil law of Europe in its present state. But to Clovis, Theodoric, and St. Benedict, without any question, we owe more than any English historian has yet ascribed,—and they are easily held in mind together, for Clovis ascended the Frank throne in the year of St. Benedict's birth, 481. Theodoric fought

the battle of Verona, and founded the Ostrogothic Kingdom in Italy twelve years later, in 493, and thereupon married the sister of Clovis. That marriage is always passed in a casual sentence, as if a merely political one, and while page after page is spent in following the alternations of furious crime and fatal chance, in the contests between Fredegonde and Brunehaut, no historian ever considers whether the great Ostrogoth who wore in the battle of Verona the dress which his mother had woven for him, was likely to have chosen a wife without love!—or how far the perfectness, justice, and temperate wisdom of every ordinance of his reign was owing to the sympathy and counsel of his Frankish queen.

You have to recollect, then, thus far, only three cardinal dates:

449. Saxon invasion.

481. Clovis reigns and St. Benedict is born.

493. Theodoric conquers at Verona.

Then, roughly, a hundred years later, in 590, Ethelbert, the fifth from Hengist, and Bertha, the third from Clotilde, are king and queen of Kent. I cannot find the date of their marriage, but the date, 590, which you must recollect for cardinal, is that of Gregory's accession to the pontificate, and I believe Bertha was then in middle life, having persevered in her religion firmly, but inoffensively, and made herself beloved by her husband and people. She, in England, Theodolinda in Lombardy, and St. Gregory in Rome:—in their hands, virtually lay the destiny of

Europe.

Then the period from Bertha to Osburga, 590 to 849—say 250 years—is passed by the Saxon people in the daily more reverent learning of the Christian faith, and daily more peaceful and skilful practice of the humane arts and duties which it invented and inculcated.

The statement given by Sir Edward Creasy of the result of these 250 years of lesson is, with one correction, the most simple and just that I can find.

"A few years before the close of the sixth century, the country was little more than a wide battle-field, where gallant but rude warriors fought with each other, or against the neighbouring Welsh or Scots; unheeding and unheeded by the rest of Europe, or, if they attracted casual attention, regarded with dread and disgust as the fiercest of barbarians and the most untameable of pagans. In the eighth century, England was looked up to with admiration and gratitude, as superior to all the other countries of Western Europe in piety and learning, and as the land whence the most zealous and successful saints and teachers came forth to convert and enlighten the still barbarous regions of the continent."

This statement is broadly true; yet the correction it needs is a very important one. England,—under her first Alfred of Northumberland, and under Ina of Wessex, is indeed during these centuries the most learned, thoughtful, and progressive of European states. But she is not a missionary power. The

missionaries are always to her, not from her:—for the very reason that she is learning so eagerly, she does not take to preaching. Ina founds his Saxon school at Rome not to teach Rome, nor convert the Pope, but to drink at the source of knowledge, and to receive laws from direct and unquestioned authority. The missionary power was wholly Scotch and Irish, and that power was wholly one of zeal and faith, not of learning. I will ask you, in the course of my next lecture, to regard it attentively; to-day, I must rapidly draw to the conclusions I would leave with you.

It is more and more wonderful to me as I think of it, that no effect whatever was produced on the Saxon, nor on any other healthy race of the North, either by the luxury of Rome, or by her art, whether constructive or imitative. The Saxon builds no aqueducts—designs no roads, rounds no theatres in imitation of her,—envies none of her vile pleasures,—admires, so far as I can judge, none of her far-carried realistic art. I suppose that it needs intelligence of a more advanced kind to see the qualities of complete sculpture: and that we may think of the Northern intellect as still like that of a child, who cares to picture its own thoughts in its own way, but does not care for the thoughts of older people, or attempt to copy what it feels too difficult. This much at least is certain, that for one cause or another, everything that now at Paris or London our painters most care for and try to realize, of ancient Rome, was utterly innocuous and unattractive to the Saxon: while his mind was frankly open to the direct teaching of Greece and to the methods of bright decoration

employed in the Byzantine Empire: for these alone seemed to his fancy suggestive of the glories of the brighter world promised by Christianity. Jewellery, vessels of gold and silver, beautifully written books, and music, are the gifts of St. Gregory alike to the Saxon and Lombard; all these beautiful things being used, not for the pleasure of the present life, but as the symbols of another; while the drawings in Saxon manuscripts, in which, better than in any other remains of their life, we can read the people's character, are rapid endeavours to express for themselves, and convey to others, some likeness of the realities of sacred event in which they had been instructed. They differ from every archaic school of former design in this evident correspondence with an imagined reality. All previous archaic art whatsoever is symbolic and decorative—not realistic. The contest of Herakles with the Hydra on a Greek vase is a mere sign that such a contest took place, not a picture of it, and in drawing that sign the potter is always thinking of the effect of the engraved lines on the curves of his pot, and taking care to keep out of the way of the handle;—but a Saxon monk would scratch his idea of the Fall of the angels or the Temptation of Christ over a whole page of his manuscript in variously explanatory scenes, evidently full of inexpressible vision, and eager to explain and illustrate all that he felt or believed.

Of the progress and arrest of these gifts, I shall have to speak in my next address; but I must regretfully conclude to-day with some brief warning against the complacency which might lead

you to regard them as either at that time entirely original in the Saxon race, or at the present day as signally characteristic of it. That form of complacency is exhibited in its most amiable but, therefore, most deceptive guise, in the passage with which the late Dean of Westminster concluded his lecture at Canterbury in April, 1854, on the subject of the landing of Augustine. I will not spoil the emphasis of the passage by comment as I read, but must take leave afterwards to intimate some grounds for abatement in the fervour of its self-gratulatory ecstasy.

"Let any one sit on the hill of the little church of St. Martin, and look on the view which is there spread before his eyes. Immediately below are the towers of the great abbey of St. Augustine, where Christian learning and civilization first struck root in the Anglo-Saxon race; and within which now, after a lapse of many centuries, a new institution has arisen, intended to carry far and wide, to countries of which Gregory and Augustine never heard, the blessings which they gave to us. Carry your view on—and there rises high above all the magnificent pile of our cathedral, equal in splendour and state to any, the noblest temple or church that Augustine could have seen in ancient Rome, rising on the very ground which derives its consecration from him. And still more than the grandeur of the outward buildings that rose from the little church of Augustine and the little palace of Ethelbert have been the institutions of all kinds of which these were the earliest cradle. From Canterbury, the first English Christian city,—from Kent, the first English Christian kingdom

—has by degrees arisen the whole constitution of Church and State in England which now binds together the whole British Empire. And from the Christianity here established in England has flowed, by direct consequence, first the Christianity of Germany; then, after a long interval, of North America; and lastly, we may trust, in time, of all India and all Australasia. The view from St. Martin's Church is indeed one of the most inspiring that can be found in the world; there is none to which I would more willingly take any one who doubted whether a small beginning could lead to a great and lasting good;—none which carries us more vividly back into the past, or more hopefully forward into the future."

To this Gregorian canticle in praise of the British constitution, I grieve, but am compelled, to take these following historical objections. The first missionary to Germany was Ulphilas, and what she owes to these islands she owes to Iona, not to Thanet. Our missionary offices to America as to Africa, consist I believe principally in the stealing of land, and the extermination of its proprietors by intoxication. Our rule in India has introduced there, Paisley instead of Cashmere shawls: in Australasia our Christian aid supplies, I suppose, the pious farmer with convict labour. And although, when the Dean wrote the above passage, St. Augustine's and the cathedral were—I take it on trust from his description—the principal objects in the prospect from St. Martin's Hill, I believe even the cheerfullest of my audience would not now think the scene one of the most inspiring in

the world. For recent progress has entirely accommodated the architecture of the scene to the convenience of the missionary workers above enumerated; to the peculiar necessities of the civilization they have achieved. For the sake of which the cathedral, the monastery, the temple, and the tomb, of Bertha, contract themselves in distant or despised subservience under the colossal walls of the county gaol.

LECTURE II.

THE PLEASURES OF FAITH

Alfred to the Confessor

I was forced in my last lecture to pass by altogether, and to-day can only with momentary definition notice, the part taken by Scottish missionaries in the Christianizing of England and Burgundy. I would pray you therefore, in order to fill the gap which I think it better to leave distinctly, than close confusedly, to read the histories of St. Patrick, St. Columba, and St. Columban, as they are given you by Montalembert in his 'Moines d'Occident.' You will find in his pages all the essential facts that are known, encircled with a nimbus of enthusiastic sympathy which I hope you will like better to see them through, than distorted by blackening fog of contemptuous rationalism. But although I ask you thus to make yourselves aware of the greatness of my omission, I must also certify you that it does not break the unity of our own immediate subject. The influence of Celtic passion and art both on Northumbria and the Continent, beneficent in all respects while it lasted, expired without any permanent share in the work or emotion of the Saxon and Frank. The book of Kells, and the bell of St.

Patrick, represent sufficiently the peculiar character of Celtic design; and long since, in the first lecture of the 'Two Paths,' I explained both the modes of skill, and points of weakness, which rendered such design unprogressive. Perfect in its peculiar manner, and exulting in the faultless practice of a narrow skill, it remained century after century incapable alike of inner growth, or foreign instruction; inimitable, yet incorrigible; marvellous, yet despicable, to its death. Despicable, I mean, only in the limitation of its capacity, not in its quality or nature. If you make a Christian of a lamb or a squirrel—what can you expect of the lamb but jumping—what of the squirrel, but pretty spirals, traced with his tail? He won't steal your nuts any more, and he'll say his prayers like this—²; but you cannot make a Beatrice's griffin, and emblem of all the Catholic Church, out of him.

You will have observed, also, that the plan of these lectures does not include any reference to the Roman Period in England; of which you will find all I think necessary to say, in the part called *Valle Crucis* of 'Our Fathers have told us.' But I must here warn you, with reference to it, of one gravely false prejudice of Montalembert. He is entirely blind to the conditions of Roman virtue, which existed in the midst of the corruptions of the Empire, forming the characters of such Emperors as Pertinax, Carus, Probus, the second Claudius, Aurelian, and our own Constantius; and he denies, with abusive violence, the power for good, of Roman Law, over the Gauls and Britons.

² Making a sign.

Respecting Roman national character, I will simply beg you to remember, that both St. Benedict and St. Gregory are Roman patricians, before they are either monk or pope; respecting its influence on Britain, I think you may rest content with Shakespeare's estimate of it. Both Lear and Cymbeline belong to this time, so difficult to our apprehension, when the Briton accepted both Roman laws and Roman gods. There is indeed the born Kentish gentleman's protest against them in Kent's—

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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