RUSKIN JOHN

THE EAGLE'S NEST

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The Eagle's Nest / Ten Lectures on the Relation of Natural Science to Art, Given Before the University of Oxford, in Lent Term, 1872:

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PREFACE

The following Lectures have been written, not with less care, but with less pains, than any in former courses, because no labour could have rendered them exhaustive statements of their subjects, and I wished, therefore, to take from them every appearance of pretending to be so: but the assertions I have made are entirely deliberate, though their terms are unstudied; and the one which to the general reader will appear most startling, that the study of anatomy is destructive to art, is instantly necessary in explanation of the system adopted for the direction of my Oxford schools.

At the period when engraving might have become to art what printing became to literature, the four greatest point-

draughtsmen hitherto known, Mantegna, Sandro Botticelli, Dürer, and Holbein, occupied themselves in the new industry. All these four men were as high in intellect and moral sentiment as in art-power; and if they had engraved as Giotto painted, with popular and unscientific simplicity, would have left an inexhaustible series of prints, delightful to the most innocent minds, and strengthening to the most noble.

But two of them, Mantegna and Dürer, were so polluted and paralyzed by the study of anatomy that the former's best works (the magnificent mythology of the Vices in the Louvre, for instance) are entirely revolting to all women and children; while Dürer never could draw one beautiful female form or face; and, of his important plates, only four, the Melancholia, St. Jerome in his study, St. Hubert, and The Knight and Death, are of any use for popular instruction, because in these only, the figures being fully draped or armed, he was enabled to think and feel rightly, being delivered from the ghastly toil of bone-delineation.

Botticelli and Holbein studied the face first, and the limbs secondarily; and the works they have left are therefore (without exception) precious; yet saddened and corrupted by the influence which the contemporary masters of body-drawing exercised on them; and at last eclipsed by their false fame. I purpose, therefore, in my next course of lectures, to explain the relation of these two draughtsmen to other masters of design, and of engraving.

Brantwood, *Sept. 2nd, 1872.*

LECTURE I.
OF WISDOM AND FOLLY IN ART.[1]

8th February, 1872

1. The Lectures I have given hitherto, though, in the matter of them conscientiously addressed to my undergraduate pupils, yet were greatly modified in method by my feeling that this undergraduate class, to which I wished to speak, was indeed a somewhat imaginary one; and that, in truth, I was addressing a mixed audience, in greater part composed of the masters of the University, before whom it was my duty to lay down the principles on which I hoped to conduct, or prepare the way for the conduct of, these schools, rather than to enter on the immediate work of elementary teaching. But to-day, and henceforward most frequently, we are to be engaged in definite, and, I trust, continuous studies; and from this time forward, I address myself wholly to my undergraduate pupils; and wish only that my Lectures may be serviceable to them, and, as far as the subject may admit of it, interesting.

2. And, farther still, I must ask even my younger hearers

[1] The proper titles of these lectures, too long for page-headings, are given in the Contents.

to pardon me if I treat that subject in a somewhat narrow, and simple way. They have a great deal of hard work to do in other schools: in these, they must not think that I underrate their powers, if I endeavour to make everything as easy to them as possible. No study that is worth pursuing seriously can be pursued without effort; but we need never make the effort painful merely for the sake of preserving our dignity. Also, I shall make my Lectures shorter than heretofore. What I tell you I wish you to remember; and I do not think it possible for you to remember well much more than I can easily tell you in half-an-hour. I will promise that, at all events, you shall always be released so well within the hour, that you can keep any appointment accurately for the next. You will not think me indolent in doing this; for, in the first place, I can assure you, it sometimes takes me a week to think over what it does not take a minute to say: and, secondly, believe me, the least part of the work of any sound art-teacher must be his talking. Nay, most deeply also, it is to be wished that, with respect to the study which I have to bring before you to-day, in its relation to art, namely, natural philosophy, the teachers of it, up to this present century, had done less work in talking, and more in observing: and it would be well even for the men of this century, pre-eminent and accomplished as they are in accuracy of observation, if they had completely conquered the old habit of considering, with respect to any matter, rather what is to be said, than what is to be known.

3. You will, perhaps, readily admit this with respect to science;

and believe my assertion of it with respect to art. You will feel the probable mischief, in both these domains of intellect, which must follow on the desire rather to talk than to know, and rather to talk than to do. But the third domain, into the midst of which, here, in Oxford, science and art seem to have thrust themselves hotly, like intrusive rocks, not without grim disturbance of the anciently fruitful plain;—your Kingdom or Princedom of Literature? Can we carry our statement into a third parallelism, for that? It is ill for Science, we say, when men desire to talk rather than to know; ill for Art, when they desire to talk rather than to do. Ill for Literature, when they desire to talk,—is it? and rather than —what else? Perhaps you think that literature means nothing else than talking?—that the triple powers of science, art, and scholarship, mean simply the powers of knowing, doing, and saying. But that is not so in any wise. The faculty of saying or writing anything well, is an art, just as much as any other; and founded on a science as definite as any other. Professor Max Müller teaches you the science of language; and there are people who will tell you that the only art I can teach you myself, is the art of it. But try your triple parallelism once more, briefly, and see if another idea will not occur to you. In science, you must not talk before you know. In art, you must not talk before you do. In literature you must not talk before you—think.

That is your third Province. The Kingdom of Thought, or Conception.

And it is entirely desirable that you should define to yourselves

the three great occupations of men in these following terms:—

SCIENCE.	The knowledge of things, whether Id
ART.	The modification of Substantial thing
LITERATURE.	The modification of Ideal things by c

4. But now observe. If this division be a just one, we ought to have a word for literature, with the 'Letter' left out of it. It is true that, for the most part, the modification of ideal things by our ideal power is not complete till it is expressed; nor even to ourselves delightful, till it is communicated. To letter it and label it—to inscribe and to word it rightly,—this is a great task, and it is the part of literature which can be most distinctly taught. But it is only the formation of its body. And the soul of it can exist without the body; but not at all the body without the soul; for that is true no less of literature than of all else in us or of us—"litera occidit, spiritus autem vivificat."

Nevertheless, I must be content to-day with our old word. We cannot say 'spiriture' nor 'animature,' instead of literature; but you must not be content with the vulgar interpretation of the word. Remember always that you come to this University,—or, at least, your fathers came,—not to learn how to say things, but how to think them.

5. "How to think them! but that is only the art of logic," you

perhaps would answer. No, again, not at all: logic is a method, not a power; and we have defined literature to be the modification of ideal things by ideal power, not by mechanical method. And you come to the University to get that power, or develop it; not to be taught the mere method of using it.

I say you come to the University for this; and perhaps some of you are much surprised to hear it! You did not know that you came to the University for any such purpose. Nay, perhaps you did not know that you had come to a University at all? You do not at this instant, some of you, I am well assured, know what a University means. Does it mean, for instance—can you answer me in a moment, whether it means—a place where everybody comes to learn something; or a place where somebody comes to learn everything? It means—or you are trying to make it mean—practically and at present, the first; but it means theoretically, and always, the last; a place where only certain persons come, to learn *everything*; that is to say, where those who wish to be able to think, come to learn to think: not to think of mathematics only, nor of morals, nor of surgery, nor chemistry, but of everything, rightly.

6. I say you do not all know this; and yet, whether you know it or not,—whether you desire it or not,—to some extent the everlasting fitness of the matter makes the facts conform to it. For we have at present, observe, schools of three kinds, in operation over the whole of England. We have—I name it first, though, I am sorry to say, it is last in influence—the

body consisting of the Royal Academy, with the Institute of Architects, and the schools at Kensington, and their branches; teaching various styles of fine or mechanical art. We have, in the second place, the Royal Society, as a central body; and, as its satellites, separate companies of men devoted to each several science: investigating, classing, and describing facts with unwearied industry. And lastly and chiefly, we have the great Universities, with all their subordinate public schools, distinctively occupied in regulating,—as I think you will at once admit,—not the language merely, nor even the language principally, but the modes of philosophical and imaginative thought in which we desire that youth should be disciplined, and age informed and majestic. The methods of language, and its range; the possibilities of its beauty, and the necessities for its precision, are all dependent upon the range and dignity of the unspoken conceptions which it is the function of these great schools of literature to awaken, and to guide.

7. The range and dignity of *conceptions*! Let us pause a minute or two at these words, and be sure we accept them.

First, what *is* a conception? What is this separate object of our work, as scholars, distinguished from artists, and from men of science?

We shall discover this better by taking a simple instance of the three agencies.

Suppose that you were actually on the plain of Pæstum, watching the drift of storm-cloud which Turner has here

engraved.[2] If you had occupied yourself chiefly in schools of science, you would think of the mode in which the electricity was collected; of the influence it had on the shape and motion of the cloud; of the force and duration of its flashes, and of other such material phenomena. If you were an artist, you would be considering how it might be possible, with the means at your disposal, to obtain the brilliancy of the light, or the depth of the gloom. Finally, if you were a scholar, as distinguished from either of these, you would be occupied with the imagination of the state of the temple in former times; and as you watched the thunderclouds drift past its columns, and the power of the God of the heavens put forth, as it seemed, in scorn of the departed power of the god who was thought by the heathen to shake the earth—the utterance of your mind would become, whether in actual words or not, such as that of the Psalmist:—"Clouds and darkness are round about Him—righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." Your thoughts would take that shape, of their own accord, and if they fell also into the language, still your essential scholarship would consist, not in your remembering the verse, still less in your knowing that "judgment" was a Latin word, and "throne" a Greek one; but in your having power enough of conception, and elevation enough of character, to understand the nature of justice, and be appalled before the majesty of dominion.

8. You come, therefore, to this University, I repeat once again,

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[2] Educational Series, No. 8, E.

that you may learn how to form conceptions of proper range or grasp, and proper dignity, or worthiness. Keeping then the ideas of a separate school of art, and separate school of science, what have you to learn in these? You would learn in the school of art, the due range and dignity of deeds; or doings—(I prefer the word to "makings," as more general), and in the school of science, you would have to learn the range and dignity of knowledges.

Now be quite clear about this: be sure whether you really agree with me or not.

You come to the School of Literature, I say, to learn the range and dignity of conceptions.

To the School of Art, to learn the range and dignity of deeds.

To the School of Science, to learn the range and dignity of knowledges.

Do you agree to that, or not? I will assume that you admit my triple division; but do you think, in opposition to me, that a school of science is still a school of science, whatever sort of knowledge it teaches; and a school of art still a school of art, whatever sort of deed it teaches; and a school of literature still a school of literature, whatever sort of notion it teaches?

Do you think that? for observe, my statement denies that. My statement is, that a school of literature teaches you to have one sort of conception, not another sort; a school of art to do a particular sort of deed, not another sort; a school of science to possess a particular sort of knowledge, not another sort.

9. I assume that you differ with me on this point;—some of

you certainly will. Well then, let me go back a step. You will all go thus far with me, that—now taking the Greek words—the school of literature teaches you to have νοῦς, or conception of things, instead of ἄνοια,—no conception of things; that the school of art teaches you τεχνὴ of things, instead of ἀτεχνία; and the school of science ἐπιστήμη, instead of ἄγνοια or 'ignorantia.' But, you recollect, Aristotle names two other faculties with these three, —φρόνησις, namely, and σοφία. He has altogether five, τεχνὴ, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, σοφία, νοῦς; that is to say, in simplest English,—art, science, sense, wisdom, and wit. We have got our art, science, and wit, set over their three domains; and we old people send you young ones to those three schools, that you may not remain artless, scienceless, nor witless. But how of the sense, and the wisdom? What domains belong to these? Do you think our trefoil division should become cinquefoil, and that we ought to have two additional schools; one of Philosophia, and one of Philophronesia? If Aristotle's division were right it would be so. But his division is wrong, and he presently shows it is; for he tells you in the next page, (in the sentence I have so often quoted to you,) that "the virtue of art is the wisdom which consists in the wit of what is honourable." Now that is perfectly true; but it of course vitiates his division altogether. He divides his entire subject into *A*, *B*, *C*, *D*, and *E*; and then he tells you that the virtue of *A* is the *B* which consists in *C*. Now you will continually find, in this way, that Aristotle's assertions are right, but his divisions illogical. It is quite true that the virtue of art is the wisdom which

consists in the wit of what is honourable; but also the virtue of science is the wit of what is honourable, and in the same sense, the virtue of νοῦς, or wit itself, consists in its *being* the wit or conception of what is honourable. Σοφία, therefore, is not only the ἀρετή τέχνης, but, in exactly the same sense, the ἀρετή ἐπιστήμης, and in this sense, it is the ἀρετή νόου. And if not governed by σοφία, each school will teach the vicious condition of its own special faculty. As σοφία is the ἀρετή of all three, so μωρία will be the κακία of all three.

10. Now in this, whether you agree with me or not, let me be at least sure you understand me. Σοφία, I say, is the virtue, μωρία is the vice, of all the three faculties of art, science, and literature. There is for each of them a negative and a positive side, as well as a zero. There is a nescience for zero in science—with wise science on one side, foolish science on the other: ἀτεχνία for zero in art, with wise art on one side, foolish art on the other; and ἄνοια for zero in νοῦς, with wise νοῦς on one side, foolish νοῦς on the other.

11. You will smile at that last expression, 'foolish νοῦς.' Yet it is, of all foolish things, the commonest and deadliest. We continually complain of men, much more of women, for reasoning ill. But it does not matter how they reason, if they don't conceive basely. Not one person in a hundred is capable of seriously reasoning; the difference between man and man is in the quickness and quality, the accipitrine intensity, the olfactory choice, of his νοῦς. Does he hawk at game or carrion? What you

choose to grasp with your mind is the question;—not how you handle it afterwards. What does it matter how you build, if you have bad bricks to build with; or how you reason, if every idea with which you begin is foul or false? And in general all fatal false reasoning proceeds from people's having some one false notion in their hearts, with which they are resolved that their reasoning *shall* comply.

But, for better illustration, I will now take my own special subject out of the three;—τεχνὴ. I have said that we have, for its zero, ἀτεχνία, or artlessness—in Latin, 'inertia,' opposed to 'ars.' Well, then, we have, from that zero, wise art on the one side, foolish art on the other; and the finer the art, the more it is capable of this living increase, or deadly defect. I will take, for example, first, a very simple art, then a finer one; but both of them arts with which most of you are thoroughly acquainted.

12. One of the simplest pieces of perfect art, which you are yourselves in the habit of practising, is the stroke of an oar given in true time. We have defined art to be the wise modification of matter by the body (substantial things by substantial power, § 3). With a good oar-stroke you displace a certain quantity of water in a wise way. Supposing you missed your stroke, and caught a crab, you would displace a certain quantity of water in a foolish way, not only ineffectually, but in a way the reverse of what you intended. The perfectness of the stroke implies not only absolutely accurate knowledge or science of the mode in which water resists the blade of an oar, but the having in

past time met that resistance repeatedly with greater and greater rightness of adaptation to the end proposed. That end being perfectly simple,—the advance of the boat as far as possible with a given expenditure of strength, you at once recognize the degree in which the art falls short of, or the artlessness negatives, your purpose. But your being 'σοφός,' as an oarsman, implies much more than this mere art founded on pure science. The fact of your being able to row in a beautiful manner depends on other things than the knowledge of the force of water, or the repeated practice of certain actions in resistance to it. It implies the practice of those actions under a resolved discipline of the body, involving regulation of the passions. It signifies submission to the authority, and amicable concurrence with the humours, of other persons; and so far as it is beautifully done at last, absolutely signifies therefore a moral and intellectual rightness, to the necessary extent influencing the character honourably and graciously. This is the sophia, or wit, of what is most honourable, which is concerned in rowing, without which it must become no rowing, or the reverse of rowing.

13. Let us next take example in an art which perhaps you will think (though I hope not) much inferior to rowing, but which is in reality a much higher art—dancing. I have just told you (§ 11) how to test the rank of arts—namely, by their corruptibility, as you judge of the fineness of organic substance. The moria,[3]

[3] If the English reader will pronounce the o in this word as in fold, and in sophia as in sop, but accenting the o, not the i, I need not any more disturb my pages with

or folly, of rowing, is only ridiculous, but the moria, or folly, of dancing, is much worse than ridiculous; and, therefore, you may know that its sophia, or wisdom, will be much more beautiful than the wisdom of rowing. Suppose, for instance, a minuet danced by two lovers, both highly bred, both of noble character, and very much in love with each other. You would see, in that, an art of the most highly finished kind, under the government of a sophia which dealt with the strongest passions, and most exquisite perceptions of beauty, possible to humanity.

14. For example of the contrary of these, in the same art, I cannot give you one more definite than that which I saw at, I think, the Gaiety Theatre—but it might have been at any London theatre now,—two years ago.

The supposed scene of the dance was Hell, which was painted in the background with its flames. The dancers were supposed to be demons, and wore black masks, with red tinsel for fiery eyes; the same red light was represented as coming out of their ears also. They began their dance by ascending through the stage on spring trap-doors, which threw them at once ten feet into the air; and its performance consisted in the expression of every kind of evil passion, in frantic excess.

15. You will not, I imagine, be at a loss to understand the sense in which the words sophia and moria are to be rightly used of these two methods of the same art. But those of you who are in the habit of accurate thinking will at once perceive that

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Greek types.

I have introduced a new element into my subject by taking an instance in a higher art. The folly of rowing consisted mainly in not being able to row; but this folly of dancing does not consist in not being able to dance, but in dancing well with evil purpose; and the better the dancing, the worse the result.

And now I am afraid I must tease you by asking your attention to what you may at first think a vain nicety in analysis, but the nicety is here essential, and I hope throughout this course of Lectures, not to be so troublesome to you again.

16. The mere negation of the power of art—the zero of it—you say, in rowing, is ridiculous. It is, of course, not less ridiculous in dancing. But what do you mean by ridiculous? You mean contemptible, so as to provoke laughter. The contempt, in either case, is slight, in ordinary society; because, though a man may neither know how to row, or dance, he may know many other things. But suppose he lived where he could not know many other things? By a stormy sea-coast, where there could be no fresco-painting, in a poor country, where could be none of the fine arts connected with wealth, and in a simple, and primitive society, not yet reached by refinements of literature; but where good rowing was necessary for the support of life, and good dancing, one of the most vivid aids to domestic pleasure. You would then say that inability to row, or to dance, was far worse than ridiculous; that it marked a man for a good-for-nothing fellow, to be regarded with indignation, as well as contempt.

Now, remember, the inertia or zero of art always involves this

kind of crime, or at least, pitiableness. The want of opportunity of learning takes away the moral guilt of artlessness; but the want of opportunity of learning such arts as are becoming in given circumstances, may indeed be no crime in an individual, but cannot be alleged in its defence by a nation. National ignorance of decent art is always criminal, unless in earliest conditions of society; and then it is brutal.

17. To that extent, therefore, culpably or otherwise, a kind of moria, or folly, is always indicated by the zero of art-power. But the true folly, or assuredly culpable folly, is in the exertion of our art power in an evil direction. And here we need the finesse of distinction, which I am afraid will be provoking to you. Observe, first, and simply, that the possession of any art-power at all implies a sophia of *some* kind. These demon dancers, of whom I have just spoken, were earning their bread by severe and honest labour. The skill they possessed could not have been acquired but by great patience and resolute self-denial; and the very power with which they were able to express, with precision, states of evil passion, indicated that they had been brought up in a society which, in some measure, knew evil from good, and which had, therefore, some measure of good in the midst of it. Nay, the farther probability is, that if you inquired into the life of these men, you would find that this demon dance had been invented by some one of them with a great imaginative power, and was performed by them not at all in preference of evil, but to meet the demand of a public whose admiration was capable of

being excited only by violence of gesture, and vice of emotion.

18. In all cases, therefore, observe, where the opportunity of learning has been given; the existence of the art-power indicates sophia and its absence indicates moria. That great fact I endeavoured to express to you, two years since, in my third introductory Lecture. In the present course I have to show you the action of the final, or higher sophia, which directs the skill of art to the best purposes; and of the final, or lower moria, which misdirects them to the worst. And the two points I shall endeavour to bring before you throughout will be these:—First, that the object of University teaching is to form your conceptions; not to acquaint you with arts, nor sciences. It is to give you a notion of what is meant by smith's work, for instance;—but not to make you blacksmiths. It is to give you a notion of what is meant by medicine, but not to make you physicians. The proper academy for blacksmiths is a blacksmith's forge; the proper academy for physicians is an hospital. Here you are to be taken away from the forge, out of the hospital, out of all special and limited labour and thought, into the 'Universitas' of labour and thought, that you may in peace, in leisure, in calm of disinterested contemplation, be enabled to conceive rightly the laws of nature, and the destinies of Man.

19. Then the second thing I have to show you is that over these three kingdoms of imagination, art, and science, there reigns a virtue or faculty, which from all time, and by all great people, has been recognised as the appointed ruler and guide of every

method of labour, or passion of soul; and the most glorious recompense of the toil, and crown of the ambition of man. “She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Lay fast hold upon her; let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life.”

Are not these, and the innumerable words like to these, which you remember as I read them, strange words, if Aristotle’s statement respecting wisdom be true; that it never contemplates anything that can make men happy, “ἥ μέν γὰρ σοφία οὐδέν θεωρει ἐξ ὧν ἔσται εὐδαίμων ἄνθρωπος”?

When we next meet, therefore, I purpose to examine what it is which wisdom, by preference, contemplates; what choice she makes among the thoughts and sciences open to her, and to what purpose she employs whatever science she may possess.

And I will briefly tell you, beforehand, that the result of the inquiry will be, that instead of regarding none of the sources of happiness, she regards nothing else; that she measures all worthiness by pure felicity; that we are permitted to conceive her as the cause even of gladness to God—“I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him,”—and that we are commanded to *know* her as queen of the populous world, “rejoicing in the habitable parts of the Earth, and whose delights are with the sons of Men.”

LECTURE II.
OF WISDOM AND FOLLY IN SCIENCE

10th February, 1872

20. In my last lecture I asserted the positive and negative powers of literature, art, and science; and endeavoured to show you some of the relations of wise art to foolish art. To-day we are to examine the nature of these positive and negative powers in science; it being the object of every true school to teach the positive or constructive power, and by all means to discourage, reprove, and extinguish the negative power.

It is very possible that you may not often have thought of, or clearly defined to yourselves, this destructive or deadly character of some elements of science. You may indeed have recognized with Pope that a little knowledge was dangerous, and you have therefore striven to drink deep; you may have recognized with Bacon, that knowledge might partially become venomous; and you may have sought, in modesty and sincerity, antidote to the inflating poison. But that there is a ruling spirit or σοφία, under whose authority you are placed, to determine for you, first the

choice, and then the use of all knowledge whatsoever; and that if you do not appeal to that ruler, much more if you disobey her, all science becomes to you ruinous in proportion to its accumulation, and as a net to your soul, fatal in proportion to the fineness of its thread,—this, I imagine, few of you, in the zeal of learning, have suspected, and fewer still have pressed their suspicion so far as to recognize or believe.

21. You must have nearly all heard of, many must have seen, the singular paintings; some also may have read the poems, of William Blake. The impression that his drawings once made is fast, and justly, fading away, though they are not without noble merit. But his poems have much more than merit; they are written with absolute sincerity, with infinite tenderness, and, though in the manner of them diseased and wild, are in verity the words of a great and wise mind, disturbed, but not deceived, by its sickness; nay, partly exalted by it, and sometimes giving forth in fiery aphorism some of the most precious words of existing literature. One of these passages I will ask you to remember; it will often be serviceable to you—

> "Doth the Eagle know what is in the pit,
> Or wilt thou go ask the Mole?"

It would be impossible to express to you in briefer terms the great truth that there is a different kind of knowledge good for every different creature, and that the glory of the higher creatures

is in ignorance of what is known to the lower.

22. And, above all, this is true of man; for every other creature is compelled by its instinct to learn its own appointed lesson, and must centralize its perception in its own being. But man has the choice of stooping in science beneath himself, and striving in science beyond himself; and the "Know thyself" is, for him, not a law to which he must in peace submit; but a precept which of all others is the most painful to understand, and the most difficult to fulfil. Most painful to understand, and humiliating; and this alike, whether it be held to refer to the knowledge beneath us, or above. For, singularly enough, men are always most conceited of the meanest science:—

> "Doth the Eagle know what is in the pit,
> Or wilt thou go ask the Mole?"

It is just those who grope with the mole, and cling with the bat, who are vainest of their sight and of their wings.

23. "Know *thyself*;" but can it indeed be sophia,—can it be the noble wisdom, which thus speaks to science? Is not this rather, you will ask, the voice of the lower virtue of prudence, concerning itself with right conduct, whether for the interests of this world or of the future? Does not sophia regard all that is above and greater than man; and by so much as we are forbidden to bury ourselves in the mole's earth-heap, by so much also, are we not urged to raise ourselves towards the stars?

Indeed, it would at first seem so; nay, in the passage of the Ethics, which I proposed to you to-day for question, you are distinctly told so. There are, it is said, many different kinds of phronesis, by which every animal recognizes what is for its own good: and man, like any other creature, has his own separate phronesis telling him what he is to seek, and to do, for the preservation of his life: but above all these forms of prudence, the Greek sage tells you, is the sophia of which the objects are unchangeable and eternal, the methods consistent, and the conclusions universal: and this wisdom has no regard whatever to the things in which the happiness of man consists, but acquaints itself only with the things that are most honourable; so that "we call Anaxagoras and Thales, and such others, wise indeed, but not prudent, in that they know nothing of what is for their own advantage, but know surpassing things, marvellous things, difficult things, and divine things."

24. Now here is a question which evidently touches *us* closely. We profess at this day to be an especially prudent nation;—to regard only the things which are for our own advantage; to leave to other races the knowledge of surpassing things, marvellous things, divine things, or beautiful things; and in our exceeding prudence we are, at this moment, refusing the purchase of, perhaps, the most interesting picture by Raphael in the world, and, certainly, one of the most beautiful works ever produced by the art-wisdom of man, for five-and-twenty thousand pounds, while we are debating whether we shall not pay three hundred

millions to the Americans, as a fine for selling a small frigate to Captain Semmes. Let me reduce these sums from thousands of pounds, to single pounds; you will then see the facts more clearly; (there is not one person in a million who knows what a "million" means; and that is one reason the nation is always ready to let its ministers spend a million or two in cannon, if they can show they have saved twopence-halfpenny in tape). These are the facts then, stating pounds for thousands of pounds; you are offered a Nativity, by Raphael, for five-and-twenty pounds, and cannot afford it; but it is thought you may be bullied into paying three hundred thousand pounds, for having sold a ship to Captain Semmes. I do not say you will pay it. Still your present position is one of deprecation and humility, and that is the kind of result which you bring about by acting with what you call "practical common sense," instead of Divine wisdom.

25. Perhaps you think I am losing Aristotle's notion of common sense, by confusing it with our vulgar English one; and that selling ships or ammunition to people whom we have not courage to fight either for or against, would not by Aristotle have been held a phronetic, or prudent proceeding. Be it so; let us be certain then, if we can, what Aristotle does mean. Take the instance I gave you in the last lecture, of the various modes of feeling in which a master of literature, of science, and of art, would severally regard the storm round the temples of Pæstum.

The man of science, we said, thought of the origin of the electricity; the artist of its light in the clouds, and the scholar, of

its relation to the power of Zeus and Poseidon. There you have Episteme; Techne; and Nous; well, now what does Phronesis do?

Phronesis puts up his umbrella, and goes home as fast as he can. Aristotle's Phronesis at least does; having no regard for marvellous things. But are you sure that Aristotle's Phronesis is indeed the right sort of Phronesis? May there not be a commonsense, as well as an art, and a science, under the command of sophia? Let us take an instance of a more subtle kind.

26. Suppose that two young ladies, (I assume in my present lectures, that none are present, and that we may say among ourselves what we like; and we do like, do we not, to suppose that young ladies excel us only in prudence, and not in wisdom?) let us suppose that two young ladies go to the observatory on a winter night, and that one is so anxious to look at the stars that she does not care whether she gives herself cold, or not; but the other is prudent, and takes care, and looks at the stars only as long as she can without catching cold. In Aristotle's mind the first young lady would properly deserve the name of Sophia, and the other that of Prudence. But in order to judge them fairly, we must assume that they are acting under exactly the same conditions. Assume that they both equally desire to look at the stars; then, the fact that one of them stops when it would be dangerous to look longer, does not show that she is less wise,—less interested, that is to say, in surpassing and marvellous things;—but it shows that she has more self-command, and is able therefore to remember

what the other does not think of. She is equally wise, and more sensible. But suppose that the two girls are originally different in disposition; and that the one, having much more imagination than the other, is more interested in these surpassing and marvellous things; so that the self-command, which is enough to stop the other, who cares little for the stars, is not enough to stop her who cares much for them;—you would say, then, that, both the girls being equally sensible, the one that caught cold was the wisest.

27. Let us make a farther supposition. Returning to our first condition, that both the girls desire equally to look at the stars; let us put it now that both have equal self-command, and would therefore, supposing no other motives were in their minds, together go on star-gazing, or together stop star-gazing; but that one of them has greater consideration for her friends than the other, and though she would not mind catching cold for her own part, would mind it much for fear of giving her mother trouble. She will leave the stars first, therefore; but should we be right now in saying that she was only more sensible than her companion, and not more wise? This respect for the feelings of others, this understanding of her duty towards others, is a much higher thing than the love of stars. It is an imaginative knowledge, not of balls of fire or differences of space, but of the feelings of living creatures, and of the forces of duty by which they justly move. This is a knowledge, or perception, therefore, of a thing more surpassing and marvellous than the stars themselves, and the grasp of it is reached by a higher sophia.

28. Will you have patience with me for one supposition more? We may assume the attraction of the spectacle of the heavens to be equal in degree, and yet, in the minds of the two girls, it may be entirely different in kind. Supposing the one versed somewhat in abstract Science, and more or less acquainted with the laws by which what she now sees may be explained; she will probably take interest chiefly in questions of distance and magnitude, in varieties of orbit, and proportions of light. Supposing the other not versed in any science of this kind, but acquainted with the traditions attached by the religion of dead nations to the figures they discerned in the sky: she will care little for arithmetical or geometrical matters, but will probably receive a much deeper emotion, from witnessing in clearness what has been the amazement of so many eyes long closed; and recognizing the same lights, through the same darkness, with innocent shepherds and husbandmen, who knew only the risings and settings of the immeasurable vault, as its lights shone on their own fields or mountains; yet saw true miracle in them, thankful that none but the Supreme Ruler could bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion. I need not surely tell you, that in this exertion of the intellect and the heart, there would be a far nobler sophia than any concerned with the analysis of matter, or the measurement of space.

29. I will not weary you longer with questions, but simply tell you, what you will find ultimately to be true, that sophia is the form of thought, which makes common sense unselfish,—

knowledge unselfish,—art unselfish,—and wit and imagination unselfish. Of all these, by themselves, it is true that they are partly venomous; that, as knowledge puffeth up, so does prudence—so does art—so does wit; but, added to all these, wisdom, or (you may read it as an equivalent word), added to all these—charity, edifieth.

30. Note the word; builds forward, or builds up, and builds securely because on modest and measured foundation, wide, though low, and in the natural and living rock.

Sophia is the faculty which recognizes in all things their bearing upon life, in the entire sum of life that we know, bestial and human; but, which, understanding the appointed objects of that life, concentrates its interest and its power on Humanity, as opposed on the one side to the Animalism which it must rule, and distinguished on the other side from the Divinity which rules it, and which it cannot imagine.

It is as little the part of a wise man to reflect much on the nature of beings above him, as of beings beneath him. It is immodest to suppose that he can conceive the one, and degrading to suppose that he should be busied with the other. To recognize his everlasting inferiority, and his everlasting greatness; to know himself, and his place; to be content to submit to God without understanding Him; and to rule the lower creation with sympathy and kindness, yet neither sharing the passion of the wild beast, nor imitating the science of the Insect;—this you will find is to be modest towards God, gentle to His creatures, and wise for

himself.

31. I think you will now be able to fasten in your minds, first the idea of unselfishness, and secondly, that of modesty, as component elements of sophia; and having obtained thus much, we will at once make use of our gain, by rendering more clear one or two points respecting its action on art, that we may then see more surely its obscurer function in science.

It is absolutely unselfish, we say, not in the sense of being without desire, or effort to gratify that desire; on the contrary, it longs intensely to see, or know the things it is rightly interested in. But it is not interested specially in itself. In the degree of his wisdom, an artist is unconcerned about his work as his own;—concerned about it only in the degree in which he would be, if it were another man's—recognizing its precise value, or no value, from that outer standpoint. I do not think, unless you examine your minds very attentively, that you can have any conception of the difficulty of doing this. Absolutely to do it is impossible, for we are all intended by nature to be a little unwise, and to derive more pleasure, therefore, from our own success than that of others. But the intense degree of the difference is usually unmeasured by us. In preparing the drawings for you to use as copies in these schools, my assistant and I are often sitting beside each other; and he is at work, usually, on the more important drawing of the two. I so far recognize that greater importance, when it exists, that if I had the power of determining which of us should succeed, and which fail, I should be wise enough to

choose his success rather than my own. But the actual effect on my own mind, and comfort, is very different in the two cases. If *he* fails, I am sorry, but not mortified;—on the contrary, perhaps a little pleased. I tell him, indulgently, 'he will do better another time,' and go down with great contentment to my lunch. But, if *I* fail, though I would rather, for the sake of the two drawings, have had it so, the effect on my temper is very different. I say, philosophically, that it was better so—but I can't eat any lunch.

32. Now, just imagine what this inherently selfish passion—unconquerable as you will find it by the most deliberate and maintained efforts—fancy what it becomes, when instead of striving to subdue, we take every means in our power to increase and encourage it; and when all the circumstances around us concur in the deadly cultivation. In all base schools of Art, the craftsman is dependent for his bread on originality; that is to say, on finding in himself some fragment of isolated faculty, by which his work may be recognized as distinct from that of other men. We are ready enough to take delight in our little doings, without any such stimulus;—what must be the effect of the popular applause which continually suggests that the little thing we can separately do is as excellent as it is singular! and what the effect of the bribe, held out to us through the whole of life, to produce—it being also at our peril *not* to produce—something different from the work of our neighbours? In all great schools of art these conditions are exactly reversed. An artist is praised in these, not for what is different in him from others,

nor for solitary performance of singular work; but only for doing most strongly what all are endeavouring; and for contributing, in the measure of his strength, to some great achievement, to be completed by the unity of multitudes, and the sequence of ages.

33. And now, passing from art to science, the unselfishness of sophia is shown by the value it therein attaches to every part of knowledge, new or old, in proportion to its real utility to mankind, or largeness of range in creation. The selfishness which renders sophia impossible, and enlarges the elastic and vaporous kingdom of folly, is shown by our caring for knowledge only so far as we have been concerned in its discovery, or are ourselves skilled and admired in its communication. If there is an art which "puffeth up," even when we are surrounded by magnificence of achievement of past ages, confessedly not by us to be rivalled, how much more must there be a science which puffeth up, when, by the very condition of science, it must be an advance on the attainments of former time, and however slight, or however slow, is still always as the leaf of a pleasant spring compared to the dried branches of years gone by? And, for the double calamity of the age in which we live, it has chanced that the demand of the vulgar and the dull for originality in Art, is associated with the demand of a sensual economy for originality in science; and the praise which is too readily given always to discoveries that are new, is enhanced by the reward which rapidity of communication now ensures to discoveries that are profitable. What marvel if future time shall reproach us with

having destroyed the labours, and betrayed the knowledge of the greatest nations and the wisest men, while we amused ourselves with fantasy in art, and with theory in science: happy, if the one was idle without being vicious, and the other mistaken without being mischievous. Nay, truth, and success, are often to us more deadly than error. Perhaps no progress more triumphant has been made in any science than that of Chemistry; but the practical fact which will remain for the contemplation of the future, is that we have lost the art of painting on glass, and invented gun-cotton and nitroglycerine. "Can you imagine," the future will say, "those English fools of the nineteenth century, who went about putting up memorials of themselves in glass which they could not paint, and blowing their women and children to pieces with cartridges they would not fight with?"

34. You may well think, gentlemen, that I am unjust and prejudiced in such sayings;—you may imagine that when all our mischievous inventions have done their worst, and the wars they provoked by cowardice have been forgotten in dishonour, our great investigators will be remembered, as men who laid first the foundations of fruitful knowledge, and vindicated the majesty of inviolable law. No, gentlemen; it will not be so. In a little while, the discoveries of which we are now so proud will be familiar to all. The marvel of the future will not be that we should have discerned them, but that our predecessors were blind to them. We may be envied, but shall not be praised, for having been allowed first to perceive and proclaim what could be concealed

no longer. But the misuse we made of our discoveries will be remembered against us, in eternal history; our ingenuity in the vindication, or the denial, of species, will be disregarded in the face of the fact that we destroyed, in civilized Europe, every rare bird and secluded flower; our chemistry of agriculture will be taunted with the memories of irremediable famine; and our mechanical contrivance will only make the age of the mitrailleuse more abhorred than that of the guillotine.

35. Yes, believe me, in spite of our political liberality, and poetical philanthropy; in spite of our almshouses, hospitals, and Sunday-schools; in spite of our missionary endeavours to preach abroad what we cannot get believed at home; and in spite of our wars against slavery, indemnified by the presentation of ingenious bills,—we shall be remembered in history as the most cruel, and therefore the most unwise, generation of men that ever yet troubled the earth:—the most cruel in proportion to their sensibility,—the most unwise in proportion to their science. No people, understanding pain, ever inflicted so much: no people, understanding facts, ever acted on them so little. You execrate the name of Eccelin of Padua, because he slew two thousand innocent persons to maintain his power; and Dante cries out against Pisa that she should be sunk in the sea, because, in revenge for treachery, she put to death, by the slow pangs of starvation, not the traitor only, but his children. But we men of London, we of the modern Pisa, slew, a little while since, *five hundred* thousand men instead of *two* thousand—(I speak

in official terms, and know my numbers)—these we slew, all guiltless; and these we slew, not for defence, nor for revenge, but most literally in *cold* blood; and these we slew, fathers and children together, by slow starvation—simply because, while we contentedly kill our own children in competition for places in the Civil Service, we never ask, when once they have got the places, whether the Civil Service is done.

36. That was our missionary work in Orissa, some three or four years ago;—our Christian miracle of the five loaves, assisted as we are in its performance, by steam-engines for the threshing of the corn, and by railroads for carrying it, and by proposals from English noblemen to cut down all the trees in England, for better growing it. That, I repeat, is what we did, a year or two ago; what are we doing now? Have any of you chanced to hear of the famine in Persia? Here, with due science, we arrange the roses in our botanic garden, thoughtless of the country of the rose. With due art of horticulture, we prepare for our harvest of peaches; —it might perhaps seriously alarm us to hear, next autumn, of a coming famine of peaches. But the famine of all things, in the country of the peach—do you know of it, care for it:—quaint famine that it is, in the fruitfullest, fairest, richest of the estates of earth; from which the Magi brought their treasures to the feet of Christ?

How much of your time, scientific faculty, popular literature, has been given, since this year began, to ascertain what England can do for the great countries under her command, or for the

nations that look to her for help; and how much to discuss the chances of a single impostor's getting a few thousands a year?

Gentlemen, if your literature, popular and other; or your art, popular and other; or your science, popular and other, is to be eagle-eyed, remember that question I to-day solemnly put to you —will you hawk at game or carrion? Shall it be only said of the thoughts of the heart of England—"Wheresoever the *carcase* is, thither shall the eagles be gathered together"?

LECTURE III.
THE RELATION OF WISE ART TO WISE SCIENCE

"The morrow after St. Valentine's," 1872

37. Our task to-day is to examine the relation between art and science, each governed by sophia, and becoming capable, therefore, of consistent and definable relation to each other. Between foolish art and foolish science, there may indeed be all manner of reciprocal mischievous influence; but between wise art and wise science there is essential relation, for each other's help and dignity.

You observe, I hope, that I always use the term 'science,' merely as the equivalent of 'knowledge.' I take the Latin word, rather than the English, to mark that it is knowledge of constant things, not merely of passing events: but you had better lose even that distinction, and receive the word "scientia" as merely the equivalent of our English "knowledge," than fall into the opposite error of supposing that science means systematization or discovery. It is not the arrangement of new systems, nor the discovery of new facts, which constitutes a man of science; but

the submission to an eternal system; and the proper grasp of facts already known.

38. And, at first, to-day, I use the word “art” only of that in which it is my special office to instruct you; graphic imitation; or, as it is commonly called, Fine art. Of course, the arts of construction,—building, carpentering, and the like, are directly dependent on many sciences, but in a manner which needs no discussion, so that we may put that part of the business out of our way. I mean by art, to-day, only imitative art; and by science, to-day, not the knowledge of general laws, but of existent facts. I do not mean by science, for instance, the knowledge that triangles with equal bases and between parallels, are equal, but the knowledge that the stars in Cassiopeia are in the form of a **W**.

Now, accepting the terms ‘science’ and ‘art’ under these limitations, wise art is only the reflex or shadow of wise science. Whatever it is really desirable and honourable to know, it is also desirable and honourable to know as completely and as long as possible; therefore, to present, or re-present, in the most constant manner; and to bring again and again, not only within the thoughts, but before the eyes; describing it, not with vague words, but distinct lines, and true colours, so as to approach always as nearly as may be to the likeness of the thing itself.

39. Can anything be more simple, more evidently or indisputably natural and right, than such connection of the two powers? That you should desire to know what you ought; what is worthy of your nature, and helpful to your life: to know that;—

nothing less,—nothing more; and to keep record and definition of such knowledge near you, in the most vivid and explanatory form?

Nothing, surely, can be more simple than this; yet the sum of art judgment and of art practice is in this. You are to recognize, or know, beautiful and noble things—notable, notabilia, or nobilia; and then you are to give the best possible account of them you can, either for the sake of others, or for the sake of your own forgetful or apathetic self, in the future.

Now as I gave you and asked you to remember without failing, an aphorism which embraced the law of wise knowledge, so, to-day, I will ask you to remember, without fail, one, which absolutely defines the relation of wise art to it. I have, already, quoted our to-day's aphorism to you, at the end of my fourth lecture on sculpture. Read the few sentences at the end of that lecture now, down to

"THE BEST, IN THIS KIND, ARE BUT SHADOWS."

That is Shakspeare's judgment of his own art. And by strange coincidence, he has put the words into the mouth of the hero whose shadow, or semblance in marble, is admittedly the most ideal and heroic we possess, of man; yet, I need not ask you, whether of the two, if it were granted you to see the statue by Phidias, or the hero Theseus himself, you would choose rather

to see the carved stone, or the living King. Do you recollect how Shakspeare's Theseus concludes his sentence, spoken of the poor tradesmen's kindly offered art, in the "Midsummer Night's Dream"?

"The best in this kind are but shadows: and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them."

It will not burden your memories painfully, I hope, though it may not advance you materially in the class list, if you will learn this entire sentence by heart, being, as it is, a faultless and complete epitome of the laws of mimetic art.

40. "But Shadows!" Make them as beautiful as you can; use them only to enable you to remember and love what they are cast by. If ever you prefer the skill of them to the simplicity of the truth, or the pleasure of them to the power of the truth, you have fallen into that vice of folly, (whether you call her κακία or μωρία,) which concludes the subtle description of her given by Prodicus, that she might be seen continually εἲς τὴν ἕαυτης σκιὰν ἀποβλέπειν—to look with love, and exclusive wonder, at *her own* shadow.

41. There is nothing that I tell you with more eager desire that you should believe—nothing with wider ground in my experience for requiring you to believe, than this, that you never will love art well, till you love what she mirrors better.

It is the widest, as the clearest experience I have to give you; for the beginning of all my own right art work in life, (and it may not be unprofitable that I should tell you this,) depended not on

my love of art, but of mountains and sea. All boys with any good in them are fond of boats, and of course I liked the mountains best when they had lakes at the bottom; and I used to walk always in the middle of the loosest gravel I could find in the roads of the midland counties, that I might hear, as I trod on it, something like the sound of the pebbles on sea-beach. No chance occurred for some time to develop what gift of drawing I had; but I would pass entire days in rambling on the Cumberland hill-sides, or staring at the lines of surf on a low sand; and when I was taken annually to the Water-colour Exhibition, I used to get hold of a catalogue before-hand, mark all the Robsons, which I knew would be of purple mountains, and all the Copley Fieldings, which I knew would be of lakes or sea; and then go deliberately round the room to these, for the sake, observe, not of the pictures, in any wise, but only of the things painted.

And through the whole of following life, whatever power of judgment I have obtained, in art, which I am now confident and happy in using, or communicating, has depended on my steady habit of always looking for the subject principally, and for the art, only as the means of expressing it.

42. At first, as in youth one is almost sure to be, I was led too far by my certainty of the rightness of this principle: and provoked into its exclusive assertion by the pertinacity with which other writers denied it: so that, in the first volume of “Modern Painters,” several passages occurred setting the subject or motive of the picture so much above the mode of

its expression, that some of my more feebly gifted disciples supposed they were fulfilling my wishes by choosing exactly the subjects for painting which they were least able to paint. But the principle itself, I maintain, now in advanced life, with more reverence and firmness than in earliest youth: and though I believe that among the teachers who have opposed its assertion, there are few who enjoy the mere artifices of composition or dexterities of handling so much as I, the time which I have given to the investigation of these has only farther assured me that the pictures were noblest which compelled me to forget them.

43. Now, therefore, you see that on this simple theory, you have only to ask what will be the subjects of wise science; these also, will be, so far as they can be imitatively or suggestively represented, the subjects of wise art: and the wisdom of both the science and art will be recognized by their being lofty in their scope, but simple in their language; clear in fancy, but clearer in interpretation; severe in discernment, but delightful in display.

44. For example's sake, since we have just been listening to Shakspeare as a teacher of science and art, we will now examine him as a *subject* of science and art.

Suppose we have the existence and essence of Shakspeare to investigate, and give permanent account of; we shall see that, as the scope and bearing of the science become nobler, art becomes more helpful to it; and at last, in its highest range, even necessary to it; but still only as its minister.

We examine Shakspeare, first, with the science of chemistry,

which informs us that Shakspeare consists of about seventy-five parts in the hundred of water, some twelve or fifteen of nitrogen, and the rest, lime, phosphorus, and essential earthy salts.

We next examine him by the science of anatomy, which tells us (with other such matters,) that Shakspeare has seven cervical, twelve dorsal, and five lumbar vertebræ; that his fore arm has a wide sphere of rotation; and that he differs from other animals of the ape species by being more delicately prehensile in the fingers, and less perfectly prehensile in the toes.

We next approach Shakspeare with the science of natural history, which tells us the colour of his eyes and hair, his habits of life, his temper, and his predilection for poaching.

There ends, as far as this subject is concerned, our possible science of substantial things. Then we take up our science of ideal things: first of passion, then of imagination; and we are told by these that Shakspeare is capable of certain emotions, and of mastering or commanding them in certain modes. Finally, we take up our science of theology, and ascertain that he is in relation, or in supposed relation, with such and such a Being, greater than himself.

45. Now, in all these successive stages of scientific description, we find art become powerful as an aid or record, in proportion to the importance of the inquiry. For chemistry, she can do scarcely anything: merely keep note of a colour, or of the form of a crystal. For anatomy, she can do somewhat more; and for natural history, almost all things: while in recording passion,

and affectionate intellect, she walks hand in hand with the highest science; and to theology, can give nobler aid even than verbal expression of literature.

46. And in considering this power of hers, remember that the theology of art has only of late been thought deserving of attention: Lord Lindsay, some thirty years ago, was the first to recognize its importance; and when I entered upon the study of the schools of Tuscany in 1845, his "Christian Mythology" was the only guide I could trust. Even as late as 1860, I had to vindicate the true position, in Christian science, of Luini, the despised pupil of Leonardo. But only assuming, what with general assent I might assume, that Raphael's dispute of the Sacrament—(or by its less frequently given, but true name—Raphael's Theologia,) is the most perfect effort yet made by art to illustrate divine science, I am prepared hereafter to show you that the most finished efforts of theologic literature, as compared with that piece of pictorial interpretation, have expressed less fully the condition of wise religious thought; and have been warped more dangerously into unwise religious speculation.

47. Upon these higher fields of inquiry we are not yet to enter. I shall endeavour for some time only to show you the function of modest art, as the handmaid of natural science; and the exponent, first of the beauty of the creatures subject to your own human life; and then of the history of that life in past time; of which one chief source of illustration is to be found in the most brilliant, and in its power on character, hitherto the most practically effective

of the arts—Heraldry.

In natural history, I at first intended to begin with the lower types of life; but as the enlarged schools now give me the means of extending the use of our examples, we will at once, for the sake of more general service, take up ornithology, of the uses of which, in general culture, I have one or two grave words to say.

48. Perhaps you thought that in the beginning of my lecture to-day I too summarily dismissed the arts of construction and action. But it was not in disrespect to them; and I must indeed ask you carefully to note one or two points respecting the arts of which an example is set us by birds;—building, and singing.

The other day, as I was calling on the ornithologist whose collection of birds is, I suppose, altogether unrivalled in Europe,—(at once a monument of unwearied love of science, and an example, in its treatment, of the most delicate and patient art)—Mr. Gould—he showed me the nest of a common English bird; a nest which, notwithstanding his knowledge of the dexterous building of birds in all the world, was not without interest even to him, and was altogether amazing and delightful to me. It was a bullfinch's nest, which had been set in the fork of a sapling tree, where it needed an extended foundation. And the bird had built this first story of her nest with withered stalks of clematis blossom; and with nothing else. These twigs it had interwoven lightly, leaving the branched heads all at the outside, producing an intricate Gothic boss of extreme grace and quaintness, apparently arranged both with triumphant pleasure in

the art of basket-making, and with definite purpose of obtaining ornamental form.

49. I fear there is no occasion to tell you that the bird had no purpose of the kind. I say that I *fear* this, because I would much rather have to undeceive you in attributing too much intellect to the lower animals, than too little. But I suppose the only error which, in the present condition of natural history, you are likely to fall into, is that of supposing that a bullfinch is merely a mechanical arrangement of nervous fibre, covered with feathers by a chronic cutaneous eruption; and impelled by a galvanic stimulus to the collection of clematis.

50. You would be in much greater, as well as in a more shameful, error, in supposing this, than if you attributed to the bullfinch the most deliberate rivalship with Mr. Street's prettiest Gothic designs. The bird has exactly the degree of emotion, the extent of science, and the command of art, which are necessary for its happiness; it had felt the clematis twigs to be lighter and tougher than any others within its reach, and probably found the forked branches of them convenient for reticulation. It had naturally placed these outside, because it wanted a smooth surface for the bottom of its nest; and the beauty of the result was much more dependent on the blossoms than the bird.

51. Nevertheless, I am sure that if you had seen the nest,—much more, if you had stood beside the architect at work upon it,—you would have greatly desired to express your admiration to her; and chat if Wordsworth, or any other simple and kindly

person, could even wish, for a little flower's sake,

> "That to this mountain daisy's self were known
> The beauty of its star-shaped shadow, thrown
> On the smooth surface of this naked stone,"

much more you would have yearned to inform the bright little nest-builder of your sympathy; and to explain to her, on art principles, what a pretty thing she was making.

52. Does it never occur to you, then, that to some of the best and wisest artists among ourselves, it may not be always possible to explain what pretty things they are making; and that, perhaps, the very perfection of their art is in their knowing so little about it?

Whether it has occurred to you or not, I assure you that it is so. The greatest artists, indeed, will condescend, occasionally, to be scientific;—will labour, somewhat systematically, about what they are doing, as vulgar persons do; and are privileged, also, to enjoy what they have made more than birds do; yet seldom, observe you, as being beautiful, but very much in the sort of feeling which we may fancy the bullfinch had also,—that the thing, whether pretty or ugly, could not have been better done; that they could not have made it otherwise, and are thankful it is no worse. And, assuredly, they have nothing like the delight in their own work which it gives to other people.

53. But putting the special simplicities of good artists out of question, let me ask you, in the second place, whether it is not

possible that the same sort of simplicity might be desirable in the whole race of mankind; and that we ought all to be doing human work which would appear better done to creatures much above us, than it does to ourselves. Why should not *our* nests be as interesting things to angels, as bullfinches' nests are to us?

You will, probably, both smile at, and shrink from, such a supposition, as an insolent one. But to my thought, it seems, on the contrary, the only modest one. That *we* should be able to admire the work of angels seems to me the impertinent idea; not, at all, that they should be able to admire ours.

54. Under existing circumstances, I confess the difficulty. It cannot be imagined that either the back streets of our manufacturing towns, or the designs of our suburban villas, are things which the angels desire to look into: but it seems to me an inevitable logical conclusion that if we are, indeed, the highest of the brute creation, we should, at least, possess as much unconscious art as the lower brutes; and build nests which shall be, for ourselves, entirely convenient; and may, perhaps, in the eyes of superior beings, appear more beautiful than to our own.

55. "Which shall be, for ourselves, entirely *convenient.*" Note the word;—becoming, decorous, harmonious, satisfying. We may not be able to build anything sublime; but, at all events, we should, like other flesh-invested creatures, be able to contrive what was decent, and it should be a human privilege to think that we may be admired in heaven for our contrivance.

I have some difficulty in proceeding with what I want to say,

because I know you must partly think I am jesting with you. I feel indeed some disposition to smile myself; not because I jest, but in the sense of contrast between what, logically, it seems, ought to be; and what we must confess, not jestingly, to be the facts. How great also,—how quaint, the confusion of sentiment in our minds, as to this matter! We continually talk of honouring God with our buildings; and yet, we dare not say, boldly, that, in His sight, we in the least expect to honour ourselves by them! And admitting, though I by no means feel disposed to admit, that here and there we may, at present, be honouring Him by work that is worthy of the nature He gave us, in how many places, think you, are we offending Him by work that is disgraceful to it?

56. Let me return, yet for an instant, to my bird and her nest. If not actually complacent and exultant in her architecture, we may at least imagine that she, and her mate, and the choir they join with, cannot but be complacent and exultant in their song. I gave you, in a former lecture, the skylark as a type of mastership in music; and remembering—some of you, I suppose, are not likely soon to forget,—the saint to whom yesterday was dedicated, let me read to you to-day some of the prettiest English words in which our natural feeling about such song is expressed.

> "And anone, as I the day espide,
> No lenger would I in my bed abide,
> But unto a wood that was fast by,

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