RUSKIN JOHN

ARATRA PENTELICI, SEVEN LECTURES ON THE ELEMENTS OF SCULPTURE

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Содержание

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Aratra Pentelici, Seven Lectures on the Elements of Sculpture / Given before the University of Oxford in Michaelmas Term, 1870

PREFACE

1. I must pray the readers of the following Lectures to remember that the duty at present laid on me at Oxford is of an exceptionally complex character. Directly, it is to awaken the interest of my pupils in a study which they have hitherto found unattractive, and imagined to be useless; but more imperatively, it is to define the principles by which the study itself should be guided; and to vindicate their security against the doubts with which frequent discussion has lately incumbered a subject which all think themselves competent to discuss. The possibility of such vindication is, of course, implied in the original consent of the Universities to the establishment of Art Professorships. Nothing can be made an element of education of which it is impossible to determine whether it is ill done or well; and the clear assertion that there is a canon law in formative Art is, at this time, a more important function of each University than the instruction of its younger members in any branch of practical skill. It matters comparatively little whether few or many of our students learn to draw; but it matters much that all who learn should be taught with accuracy. And the number who may be justifiably advised to give any part of the time they spend at college to the study of painting or sculpture ought to depend, and finally *must* depend, on their being certified that painting and sculpture, no less than language, or than reasoning, have grammar and method,—that they permit a recognizable distinction between scholarship and ignorance, and enforce a constant distinction between Right and Wrong.

2. This opening course of Lectures on Sculpture is therefore restricted to the statement, not only of first principles, but of those which were illustrated by the practice of one school, and by that practice in its simplest branch, the analysis of which could be certified by easily accessible examples, and aided by the indisputable evidence of photography.[1]

The exclusion of the terminal Lecture[2] of the course from the series now published, is in order to mark more definitely this limitation of my subject; but in other respects the Lectures have been amplified in arranging them for the press, and the portions of them trusted at the time to extempore delivery (not through indolence, but because explanations of detail are always most intelligible when most familiar) have been in substance to the best of my power set down, and in what I said too imperfectly, completed.

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[1] Photography cannot exhibit the character of large and finished sculpture; but its audacity of shadow is in perfect harmony with the more roughly picturesque treatment necessary in coins. For the rendering of all such frank relief, and for the better explanation of forms disturbed by the luster of metal or polished stone, the method employed in the plates of this volume will be found, I believe, satisfactory. Casts are first taken from the coins, in white plaster; these are photographed, and the photograph printed by the autotype process. Plate XII. is exceptional, being a pure mezzotint engraving of the old school, excellently carried through by my assistant, Mr. Allen, who was taught, as a personal favor to myself, by my friend, and Turner's fellow-worker, Thomas Lupton. Plate IV. was intended to be a photograph from the superb vase in the British Museum, No. 564 in Mr. Newton's Catalogue; but its variety of color defied photography, and after the sheets had gone to press I was compelled to reduce Le Normand's plate of it, which is unsatisfactory, but answers my immediate purpose.The enlarged photographs for use in the Lecture Room were made for me with most successful skill by Sergeant Spackman, of South Kensington; and the help throughout rendered to me by Mr. Burgess is acknowledged in the course of the Lectures; though with thanks which must remain inadequate lest they should become tedious; for Mr. Burgess drew the subjects of Plates III., X., and XIII.; and drew and engraved every wood-cut in the book.

[2] It is included in this edition. See Lecture VII., pp. 132-158.

3. In one essential particular I have felt it necessary to write what I would not have spoken. I had intended to make no reference, in my University Lectures, to existing schools of Art, except in cases where it might be necessary to point out some undervalued excellence. The objects specified in the eleventh paragraph of my inaugural Lecture[3] might, I hoped, have been accomplished without reference to any works deserving of blame; but the Exhibition of the Royal Academy in the present year showed me a necessity of departing from my original intention. The task of impartial criticism[4] is now, unhappily, no longer to rescue modest skill from neglect; but to withstand the errors of insolent genius, and abate the influence of plausible mediocrity.

The Exhibition of 1871 was very notable in this important particular, that it embraced some representation of the modern schools of nearly every country in Europe: and I am well assured that, looking back upon it after the excitement of that singular interest has passed away, every thoughtful judge of Art will confirm my assertion, that it contained not a single picture of accomplished merit; while it contained many that were disgraceful to Art, and some that were disgraceful to humanity.

4. It becomes, under such circumstances, my inevitable duty to speak of the existing conditions of Art with plainness enough to guard the youths whose judgments I am intrusted to form, from being misled, either by their own naturally vivid interest in what represents, however unworthily, the scenes and persons of their own day, or by the cunningly devised, and, without doubt, powerful allurements of Art which has long since confessed itself to have no other object than to allure. I have, therefore, added to the second of these Lectures such illustration of the motives and course of modern industry as naturally arose out of its subject; and shall continue in future to make similar applications; rarely indeed, permitting myself, in the Lectures actually read before the University, to introduce, subjects of instant, and therefore too exciting, interest; but completing the addresses which I prepare for publication in these, and in any other, particulars, which may render them more widely serviceable.

5. The present course of Lectures will be followed, if I am able to fulfill the design of them, by one of a like elementary character on Architecture; and that by a third series on Christian Sculpture: but, in the meantime, my effort is to direct the attention of the resident students to Natural History, and to the higher branches of ideal Landscape: and it will be, I trust, accepted as sufficient reason for the delay which has occurred in preparing the following sheets for the press, that I have not only been interrupted by a dangerous illness, but engaged, in what remained to me of the summer, in an endeavor to deduce, from the overwhelming complexity of modern classification in the Natural Sciences, some forms capable of easier reference by Art students, to whom the anatomy of brutal and floral nature is often no less important than that of the human body.

The preparation of examples for manual practice, and the arrangement of standards for reference, both in Painting and Sculpture, had to be carried on, meanwhile, as I was able. For what has already been done, the reader is referred to the "Catalogue of the Educational Series," published at the end of the Spring Term: of what remains to be done I will make no anticipatory statement, being content to have ascribed to me rather the fault of narrowness in design, than of extravagance in expectation.

Denmark Hill,
25th November, 1871.

[3] Lectures on Art, 1870.

[4] A pamphlet by the Earl of Southesk, 'Britain's Art Paradise' (Edmonston and Douglas, Edinburgh), contains an entirely admirable criticism of the most faultful pictures of the 1871 Exhibition. It is to be regretted that Lord Southesk speaks only to condemn; but indeed, in my own three days' review of the rooms, I found nothing deserving of notice otherwise, except Mr. Hook's always pleasant sketches from fisher-life, and Mr. Pettie's graceful and powerful, though too slightly painted, study from Henry IV.

LECTURE I.
OF THE DIVISION OF ARTS

November, 1870

1. If, as is commonly believed, the subject of study which it is my special function to bring before you had no relation to the great interests of mankind, I should have less courage in asking for your attention to-day, than when I first addressed you; though, even then, I did not do so without painful diffidence. For at this moment, even supposing that in other places it were possible for men to pursue their ordinary avocations undisturbed by indignation or pity,—here, at least, in the midst of the deliberative and religious influences of England, only one subject, I am well assured, can seriously occupy your thoughts—the necessity, namely, of determining how it has come to pass that, in these recent days, iniquity the most reckless and monstrous can be committed unanimously, by men more generous than ever yet in the world's history were deceived into deeds of cruelty; and that prolonged agony of body and spirit, such as we should shrink from inflicting willfully on a single criminal, has become the appointed and accepted portion of unnumbered multitudes of innocent persons, inhabiting the districts of the world which, of all others, as it seemed, were best instructed in the laws of civilization, and most richly invested with the honor, and indulged in the felicity, of peace.

Believe me, however, the subject of Art—instead of being foreign to these deep questions of social duty and peril,—is so vitally connected with them, that it would be impossible for me now to pursue the line of thought in which I began these lectures, because so ghastly an emphasis would be given to every sentence by the force of passing events. It is well, then, that in the plan I have laid down for your study, we shall now be led into the examination of technical details, or abstract conditions of sentiment; so that the hours you spend with me may be times of repose from heavier thoughts. But it chances strangely that, in this course of minutely detailed study, I have first to set before you the most essential piece of human workmanship, the plow, at the very moment when—(you may see the announcement in the journals either of yesterday or the day before)—the swords of your soldiers have been sent for *to be sharpened*, and not at all to be beaten into plowshares. I permit myself, therefore, to remind you of the watchword of all my earnest writings—"Soldiers of the Plowshare, instead of Soldiers of the Sword,"—and I know it my duty to assert to you that the work we enter upon to-day is no trivial one, but full of solemn hope; the hope, namely, that among you there may be found men wise enough to lead the national passions towards the arts of peace, instead of the arts of war.

I say, the work "we enter upon," because the first four lectures I gave in the spring were wholly prefatory; and the following three only defined for you methods of practice. To-day we begin the systematic analysis and progressive study of our subject.

2. In general, the three great, or fine, Arts of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, are thought of as distinct from the lower and more mechanical formative arts, such as carpentry or pottery. But we cannot, either verbally, or with any practical advantage, admit such classification. How are we to distinguish painting on canvas from painting on china?—or painting on china from painting on glass?—or painting on glass from infusion of color into any vitreous substance, such as enamel?—or the infusion of color into glass and enamel from the infusion of color into wool or silk, and weaving of pictures in tapestry, or patterns in dress? You will find that although, in ultimately accurate use of the word, painting must be held to mean only the laying of a pigment on a surface with a soft instrument; yet, in broad comparison of the functions of Art, we must conceive of one and the same great artistic faculty, as governing *every mode of disposing colors in a permanent relation on, or in,*

a solid substance; whether it be by tinting canvas, or dyeing stuffs; inlaying metals with fused flint, or coating walls with colored stone.

3. Similarly, the word 'Sculpture,'—though in ultimate accuracy it is to be limited to the development of form in hard substances by cutting away portions of their mass—in broad definition, must be held to signify *the reduction of any shapeless mass of solid matter into an intended shape*, whatever the consistence of the substance, or nature of the instrument employed; whether we carve a granite mountain, or a piece of box-wood, and whether we use, for our forming instrument, ax, or hammer, or chisel, or our own hands, or water to soften, or fire to fuse;—whenever and however we bring a shapeless thing into shape, we do so under the laws of the one great art of Sculpture.

4. Having thus broadly defined painting and sculpture, we shall see that there is, in the third place, a class of work separated from both, in a specific manner, and including a great group of arts which neither, of necessity, *tint*, nor for the sake of form merely, *shape* the substances they deal with; but construct or arrange them with a view to the resistance of some external force. We construct, for instance, a table with a flat top, and some support of prop, or leg, proportioned in strength to such weights as the table is intended to carry. We construct a ship out of planks, or plates of iron, with reference to certain forces of impact to be sustained, and of inertia to be overcome; or we construct a wall or roof with distinct reference to forces of pressure and oscillation, to be sustained or guarded against; and, therefore, in every case, with especial consideration of the strength of our materials, and the nature of that strength, elastic, tenacious, brittle, and the like.

Now although this group of arts nearly always involves the putting of two or more separate pieces together, we must not define it by that accident. The blade of an oar is not less formed with reference to external force than if it were made of many pieces; and the frame of a boat, whether hollowed out of a tree-trunk, or constructed of planks nailed together, is essentially the same piece of art; to be judged by its buoyancy and capacity of progression. Still, from the most wonderful piece of all architecture, the human skeleton, to this simple one,[5] the plowshare, on which it depends for its subsistence, *the putting of two or more pieces together* is curiously necessary to the perfectness of every fine instrument; and the peculiar mechanical work of Dædalus,—inlaying,—becomes all the more delightful to us in external aspect, because, as in the jawbone of a Saurian, or the wood of a bow, it is essential to the finest capacities of tension and resistance.

5. And observe how unbroken the ascent from this, the simplest architecture, to the loftiest. The placing of the timbers in a ship's stem, and the laying of the stones in a bridge buttress, are similar in art to the construction of the plowshare, differing in no essential point, either in that they deal with other materials, or because, of the three things produced, one has to divide earth by advancing through it, another to divide water by advancing through it, and the third to divide water which advances against it. And again, the buttress of a bridge differs only from that of a cathedral in having less weight to sustain, and more to resist. We can find no term in the gradation, from the plowshare to the cathedral buttress, at which we can set a logical distinction.

6. Thus then we have simply three divisions of Art—one, that of giving colors to substance; another, that of giving form to it without question of resistance to force; and the third, that of giving form or position which will make it capable of such resistance. All the fine arts are embraced under these three divisions. Do not think that it is only a logical or scientific affectation to mass them together in this manner; it is, on the contrary, of the first practical importance to understand that the painter's faculty, or masterhood over color, being as subtle as a musician's over sound, must be looked to for the government of every operation in which color is employed; and that, in the same manner, the appliance of any art whatsoever to minor objects cannot be right, unless under the direction of a true master of that art. Under the present system, you keep your Academician occupied only in producing

[5] I had a real plowshare on my lecture-table; but it would interrupt the drift of the statements in the text too long if I attempted here to illustrate by figures the relation of the colter to the share, and of the hard to the soft pieces of metal in the share itself.

tinted pieces of canvas to be shown in frames, and smooth pieces of marble to be placed in niches; while you expect your builder or constructor to design colored patterns in stone and brick, and your china-ware merchant to keep a separate body of workwomen who can paint china, but nothing else. By this division of labor, you ruin all the arts at once. The work of the Academician becomes mean and effeminate, because he is not used to treat color on a grand scale and in rough materials; and your manufactures become base, because no well-educated person sets hand to them. And therefore it is necessary to understand, not merely as a logical statement, but as a practical necessity, that wherever beautiful color is to be arranged, you need a Master of Painting; and wherever noble form is to be given, a Master of Sculpture; and wherever complex mechanical force is to be resisted; a Master of Architecture.

7. But over this triple division there must rule another yet more important. Any of these three arts may be either imitative of natural objects or limited to useful appliance. You may either paint a picture that represents a scene, or your street door, to keep it from rotting; you may mold a statue, or a plate; build the resemblance of a cluster of lotus stalks, or only a square pier. Generally speaking, Painting and Sculpture will be imitative, and Architecture merely useful; but there is a great deal of Sculpture—as this crystal ball,[6] for instance, which is not imitative, and a great deal of architecture which, to some extent, is so, as the so-called foils of Gothic apertures; and for many other reasons you will find it necessary to keep distinction clear in your minds between the arts—of whatever kind—which are imitative, and produce a resemblance or image of something which is not present; and those which are limited to the production of some useful reality, as the blade of a knife, or the wall of a house. You will perceive also, as we advance, that sculpture and painting are indeed in this respect only one art; and that we shall have constantly to speak and think of them as simply *graphic*, whether with chisel or color, their principal function being to make us, in the words of Aristotle, "θεωρητικοι τον περι τα σωματα καλλους" (Polit. 8. 3), "having capacity and habit of contemplation of the beauty that is in material things;" while architecture, and its correlative arts, are to be practiced under quite other conditions of sentiment.

8. Now it is obvious that so far as the fine arts consist either in imitation or mechanical construction, the right judgment of them must depend on our knowledge of the things they imitate, and forces they resist: and my function of teaching here would (for instance) so far resolve itself, either into demonstration that this painting of a peach[7] does resemble a peach, or explanation of the way in which this plowshare (for instance) is shaped so as to throw the earth aside with least force of thrust. And in both of these methods of study, though of course your own diligence must be your chief master, to a certain extent your Professor of Art can always guide you securely, and can show you, either that the image does truly resemble what it attempts to resemble, or that the structure is rightly prepared for the service it has to perform. But there is yet another virtue of fine art which is, perhaps, exactly that about which you will expect your Professor to teach you most, and which, on the contrary, is exactly that about which you must teach yourselves all that it is essential to learn.

[6] A sphere of rock crystal, cut in Japan, enough imaginable by the reader, without a figure.

[7] One of William Hunt's peaches; not, I am afraid, imaginable altogether, but still less representable by figure.

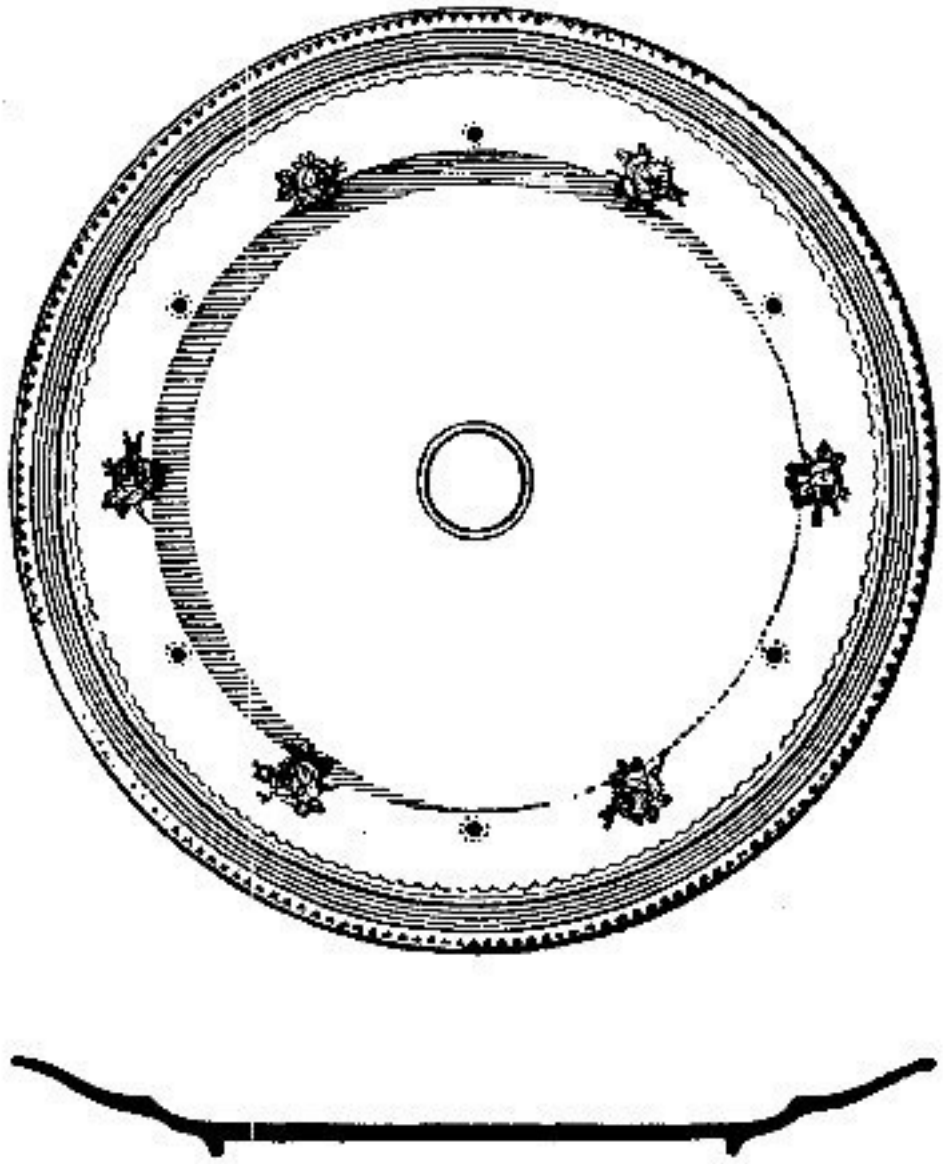


Fig. 1

9. I have here in my hand one of the simplest possible examples of the union of the graphic and constructive powers,—one of my breakfast plates. Since all the finely architectural arts, we said, began in the shaping of the cup and the platter, we will begin, ourselves, with the platter.

Why has it been made round? For two structural reasons: first, that the greatest holding surface may be gathered into the smallest space; and secondly, that in being pushed past other things on the table, it may come into least contact with them.

Next, why has it a rim? For two other structural reasons: first, that it is convenient to put salt or mustard upon; but secondly, and chiefly, that the plate may be easily laid hold of. The rim is the simplest form of continuous handle.

Farther, to keep it from soiling the cloth, it will be wise to put this ridge beneath, round the bottom; for as the rim is the simplest possible form of continuous handle, so this is the simplest form of continuous leg. And we get the section given beneath the figure for the essential one of a rightly made platter.

10. Thus far our art has been strictly utilitarian, having respect to conditions of collision, of carriage, and of support. But now, on the surface of our piece of pottery, here are various bands

and spots of color which are presumably set there to make it pleasanter to the eye. Six of the spots, seen closely, you discover are intended to represent flowers. These then have as distinctly a graphic purpose as the other properties of the plate have an architectural one, and the first critical question we have to ask about them is, whether they are like roses or not. I will anticipate what I have to say in subsequent Lectures so far as to assure you that, if they are to be like roses at all, the liker they can be, the better. Do not suppose, as many people will tell you, that because this is a common manufactured article, your roses on it are the better for being ill-painted, or half-painted. If they had been painted by the same hand that did this peach, the plate would have been all the better for it; but, as it chanced, there was no hand such as William Hunt's to paint them, and their graphic power is not distinguished. In any case, however, that graphic power must have been subordinate to their effect as pink spots, while the band of green-blue round the plate's edge, and the spots of gold, pretend to no graphic power at all, but are meaningless spaces of color or metal. Still less have they any mechanical office: they add nowise to the serviceableness of the plate; and their agreeableness, if they possess any, depends, therefore, neither on any imitative, nor any structural, character; but on some inherent pleasantness in themselves, either of mere colors to the eye, (as of taste to the tongue,) or in the placing of those colors in relations which obey some mental principle of order, or physical principle of harmony.

11. These abstract relations and inherent pleasantnesses, whether in space, number, or time, and whether of colors or sounds, form what we may properly term the musical or harmonic element in every art; and the study of them is an entirely separate science. It is the branch of art-philosophy to which the word 'æsthetics' should be strictly limited, being the inquiry into the nature of things that in themselves are pleasant to the human senses or instincts, though they represent nothing, and serve for nothing, their only service *being* their pleasantness. Thus it is the province of æsthetics to tell you, (if you did not know it before,) that the taste and color of a peach are pleasant, and to ascertain, if it be ascertainable, (and you have any curiosity to know,) why they are so.

12. The information would, I presume, to most of you, be gratuitous. If it were not, and you chanced to be in a sick state of body in which you disliked peaches, it would be, for the time, to you false information, and, so far as it was true of other people, to you useless. Nearly the whole study of æsthetics is in like manner either gratuitous or useless. Either you like the right things without being recommended to do so, or, if you dislike them, your mind cannot be changed by lectures on the laws of taste. You recollect the story of Thackeray, provoked, as he was helping himself to strawberries, by a young coxcomb's telling him that "he never took fruit or sweets." "That," replied, or is said to have replied, Thackeray, "is because you are a sot, and a glutton." And the whole science of æsthetics is, in the depth of it, expressed by one passage of Goethe's in the end of the second part of Faust;—the notable one that follows the song of the Lemures, when the angels enter to dispute with the fiends for the soul of Faust. They enter singing—"Pardon to sinners and life to the dust." Mephistopheles hears them first, and exclaims to his troop, "Discord I hear, and filthy jingling"—"Mis-töne höre ich: garstiges Geklimper." This, you see, is the extreme of bad taste in music. Presently the angelic host begin strewing roses, which discomfits the diabolic crowd altogether. Mephistopheles in vain calls to them—"What do you duck and shrink for—is that proper hellish behavior? Stand fast, and let them strew"—"Was duckt und zuckt ihr; ist das Hellen-brauch? So haltet stand, und lasst sie streuen." There you have also, the extreme, of bad taste in sight and smell. And in the whole passage is a brief embodiment for you of the ultimate fact that all æsthetics depend on the health of soul and body, and the proper exercise of both, not only through years, but generations. Only by harmony of both collateral and successive lives can the great doctrine of the Muses be received which enables men "χαιρειν ορθως,"—"to have pleasure rightly;" and there is no other definition of the beautiful, nor of any subject of delight to the æsthetic faculty, than that it is what one noble spirit has created, seen and felt by another of similar or equal nobility. So much as there is in you of ox, or of swine, perceives no beauty, and creates none: what is human in you, in exact proportion to the perfectness of its humanity, can create it, and receive.

13. Returning now to the very elementary form in which the appeal to our æsthetic virtue is made in our breakfast-plate, you notice that there are two distinct kinds of pleasantness attempted. One by hues of color; the other by proportions of space. I have called these the musical elements of the arts relating to sight; and there are indeed two complete sciences, one of the combinations of color, and the other of the combinations of line and form, which might each of them separately engage us in as intricate study as that of the science of music. But of the two, the science of color is, in the Greek sense, the more musical, being one of the divisions of the Apolline power; and it is so practically educational, that if we are not using the faculty for color to discipline nations, they will infallibly use it themselves as a means of corruption. Both music and color are naturally influences of peace; but in the war trumpet, and the war shield, in the battle song and battle standard, they have concentrated by beautiful imagination the cruel passions of men; and there is nothing in all the Divina Commedia of history more grotesque, yet more frightful, than the fact that, from the almost fabulous period when the insanity and impiety of war wrote themselves in the symbols of the shields of the Seven against Thebes, colors have been the sign and stimulus of the most furious and fatal passions that have rent the nations: blue against green, in the decline of the Roman Empire; black against white, in that of Florence; red against white, in the wars of the Royal houses in England; and at this moment, red against white, in the contest of anarchy and loyalty, in all the world.

14. On the other hand, the directly ethical influence of color in the sky, the trees, flowers, and colored creatures round us, and in our own various arts massed under the one name of painting, is so essential and constant that we cease to recognize it, because we are never long enough altogether deprived of it to feel our need; and the mental diseases induced by the influence of corrupt color are as little suspected, or traced to their true source, as the bodily weaknesses resulting from atmospheric miasmata.

15. The second musical science which belongs peculiarly to sculpture, (and to painting, so far as it represents form,) consists in the disposition of beautiful masses. That is to say, beautiful surfaces limited by beautiful lines. Beautiful *surfaces*, observe; and remember what is noted in my Fourth Lecture of the difference between a space and a mass. If you have at any time examined carefully, or practiced from, the drawings of shells placed in your copying series, you cannot but have felt the difference in the grace between the aspects of the same line, when inclosing a rounded or unrounded space. The exact science of sculpture is that of the relations between outline and the solid form it limits; and it does not matter whether that relation be indicated by drawing or carving, so long as the expression of solid form is the mental purpose; it is the science always of the beauty of relation in three dimensions. To take the simplest possible line of continuous limit—the circle: the flat disk inclosed by it may indeed be made an element of decoration, though a very meager one; but its relative mass, the ball, being gradated in three dimensions, is always delightful. Here[8] is at once the simplest, and, in mere patient mechanism, the most skillful, piece of sculpture I can possibly show you,—a piece of the purest rock-crystal, chiseled, (I believe, by mere toil of hand,) into a perfect sphere. Imitating nothing, constructing nothing; sculpture for sculpture's sake of purest natural substance into simplest primary form.

16. Again. Out of the nacre of any mussel or oyster shell you might cut, at your pleasure, any quantity of small flat circular disks of the prettiest color and luster. To some extent, such tinsel or foil of shell *is* used pleasantly for decoration. But the mussel or oyster becoming itself an unwilling modeler, agglutinates its juice into three dimensions, and the fact of the surface being now geometrically gradated, together with the savage instinct of attributing value to what is difficult to obtain, make the little boss so precious in men's sight, that wise eagerness of search for the kingdom of heaven can be likened to their eagerness of search for *it*; and the gates of Paradise can be no otherwise rendered so fair to their poor intelligence, as by telling them that every gate was of "one pearl."

[8] The crystal ball above mentioned.

17. But take note here. We have just seen that the sum of the perceptive faculty is expressed in these words of Aristotle's, "to take pleasure rightly" or straightly—χαιρειν ορθως. Now, it is not possible to do the direct opposite of that,—to take pleasure iniquitously or obliquely—χαιρειν αδικως or σκολιως,—more than you do in enjoying a thing because your neighbor cannot get it. You may enjoy a thing legitimately because it is rare, and cannot be seen often (as you do a fine aurora, or a sunset, or an unusually lovely flower); that is Nature's way of stimulating your attention. But if you enjoy it because your neighbor cannot have it,—and, remember, all value attached to pearls more than glass beads, is merely and purely for that cause,—then you rejoice through the worst of idolatries, covetousness; and neither arithmetic, nor writing, nor any other so-called essential of education, is now so vitally necessary to the population of Europe, as such acquaintance with the principles of intrinsic value, as may result in the iconoclasm of jewelry; and in the clear understanding that we are not, in that instinct, civilized, but yet remain wholly savage, so far as we care for display of this selfish kind.

You think, perhaps, I am quitting my subject, and proceeding, as it is too often with appearance of justice alleged against me, into irrelevant matter. Pardon me; the end, not only of these Lectures, but of my whole Professorship, would be accomplished,—and far more than that,—if only the English nation could be made to understand that the beauty which is indeed to be a joy forever, must be a joy for all; and that though the idolatry may not have been wholly divine which sculptured gods, the idolatry is wholly diabolic, which, for vulgar display, sculptures diamonds.

18. To go back to the point under discussion. A pearl, or a glass bead, may owe its pleasantness in some degree to its luster as well as to its roundness. But a mere and simple ball of unpolished stone is enough for sculpturesque value. You may have noticed that the quatrefoil used in the Ducal Palace of Venice owes its complete loveliness in distant effect to the finishing of its cusps. The extremity of the cusp is a mere ball of Istrian marble; and consider how subtle the faculty of sight must be, since it recognizes at any distance, and is gratified by, the mystery of the termination of cusp obtained by the gradated light on the ball.

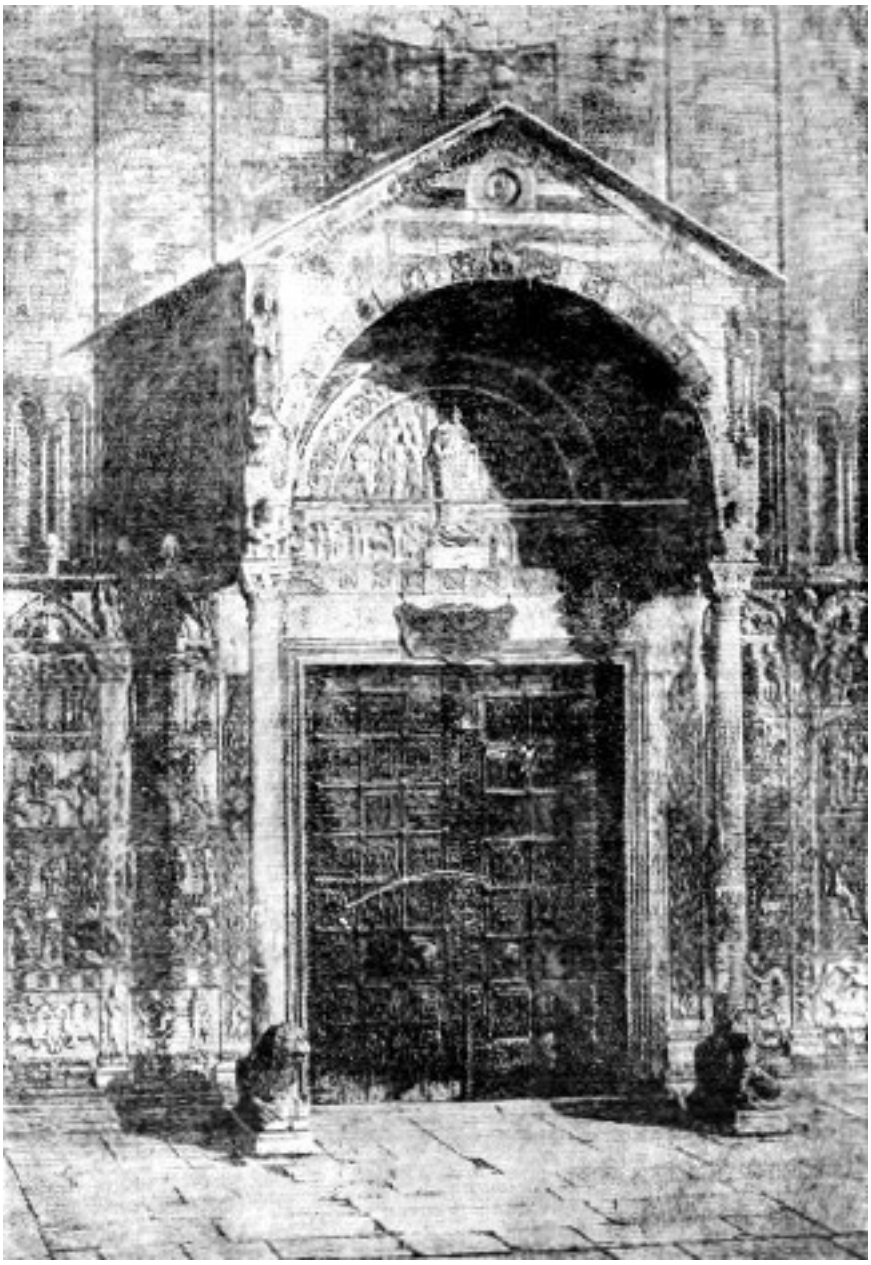
In that Venetian tracery this simplest element of sculptured form is used sparingly, as the most precious that can be employed to finish the façade. But alike in our own, and the French, central Gothic, the ball-flower is lavished on every line—and in your St. Mary's spire, and the Salisbury spire, and the towers of Notre Dame of Paris, the rich pleasantness of decoration,—indeed, their so-called 'decorative style,'—consists only in being daintily beset with stone balls. It is true the balls are modified into dim likeness of flowers; but do you trace the resemblance to the rose in their distant, which is their intended, effect?

19. But, farther, let the ball have motion; then the form it generates will be that of a cylinder. You have, perhaps, thought that pure early English architecture depended for its charm on visibility of construction. It depends for its charm altogether on the abstract harmony of groups of cylinders,[9] arbitrarily bent into moldings, and arbitrarily associated as shafts, having no *real* relation to construction whatsoever, and a theoretical relation so subtle that none of us had seen it till Professor Willis worked it out for us.

20. And now, proceeding to analysis of higher sculpture, you may have observed the importance I have attached to the porch of San Zenone, at Verona, by making it, among your standards, the first of the group which is to illustrate the system of sculpture and architecture founded on faith in a future life. That porch, fortunately represented in the photograph, from which Plate I. has been engraved, under a clear and pleasant light, furnishes you with examples of sculpture of every kind, from the

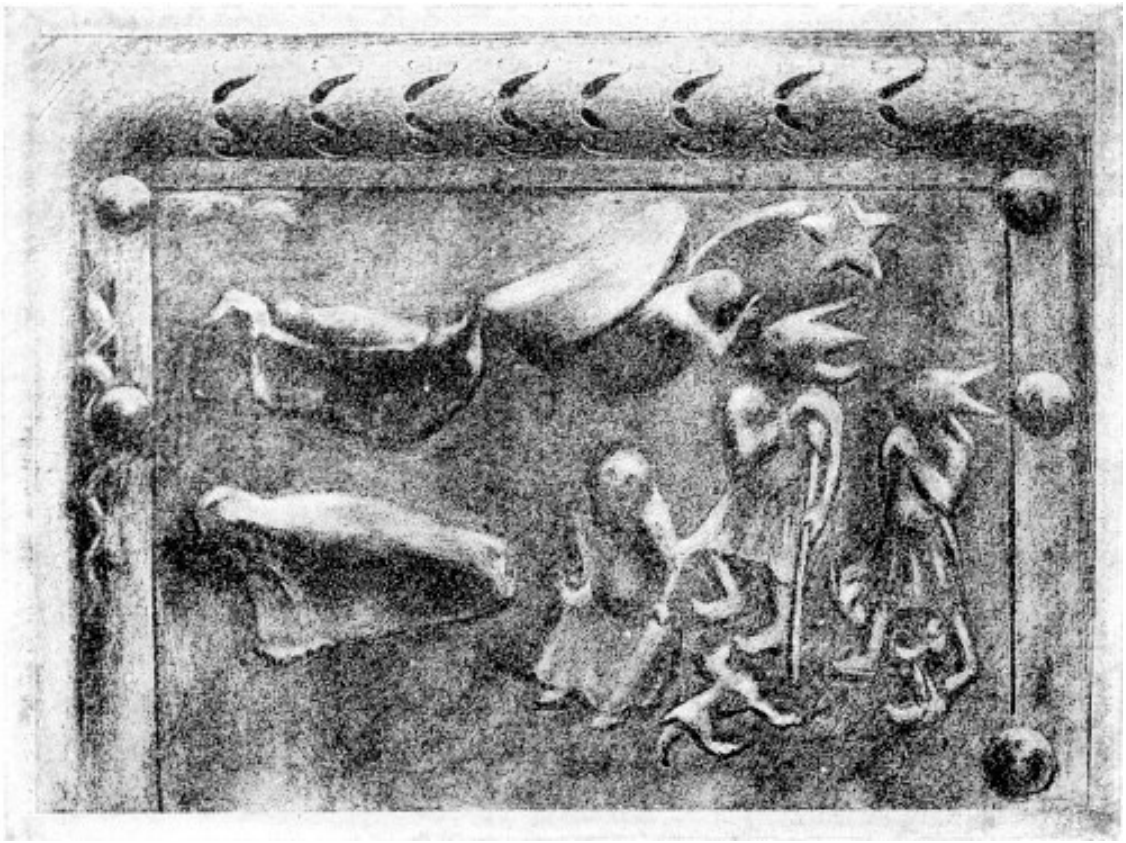
[9] All grandest effects in moldings may be, and for the most part have been, obtained by rolls and cavettos of circular (segmental) section. More refined sections, as that of the fluting of a Doric shaft, are only of use near the eye and in beautiful stone; and the pursuit of them was one of the many errors of later Gothic. The statement in the text that the moldings, even of best time, "have no real relation to construction," is scarcely strong enough: they in fact contend with, and deny the construction, their principal purpose seeming to be the concealment of the joints of the voussoirs.

flattest incised bas-relief to solid statues, both in marble and bronze. And the two points I have been pressing upon you are conclusively exhibited here, namely,—(1) that sculpture is essentially the production of a pleasant bossiness or roundness of surface; (2) that the pleasantness of that bossy condition to the eye is irrespective of imitation on one side, and of structure on the other.



I.
PORCH OF SAN ZENONE. VERONA.

II.
THE ARETHUSA OF SYRACUSE.



III.
THE WARNING TO THE KINGS
SAN ZENONE. VERONA.

21. (1.) Sculpture is essentially the production of a pleasant bossiness or roundness of surface.

If you look from some distance at these two engravings of Greek coins, (place the book open, so that you can see the opposite plate three or four yards off,) you will find the relief on each of them simplifies itself into a pearl-like portion of a sphere, with exquisitely gradated light on its surface. When you look at them nearer, you will see that each smaller portion into which they are divided —cheek, or brow, or leaf, or tress of hair—resolves itself also into a rounded or undulated surface, pleasant by gradation of light. Every several surface is delightful in itself, as a shell, or a tuft of rounded moss, or the bossy masses of distant forest would be. That these intricately modulated masses present some resemblance to a girl's face, such as the Syracusans imagined that of the water-goddess Arethusa, is entirely a secondary matter; the primary condition is that the masses shall be beautifully rounded, and disposed with due discretion and order.

22. (2.) It is difficult for you, at first, to feel this order and beauty of surface, apart from the imitation. But you can see there is a pretty disposition of, and relation between, the projections of a fir-cone, though the studded spiral imitates nothing. Order exactly the same in kind, only much more complex; and an abstract beauty of surface rendered definite by increase and decline of light—(for every curve of surface has its own luminous law, and the light and shade on a parabolic solid differs, specifically, from that on an elliptical or spherical one)—it is the essential business of the sculptor to obtain; as it is the essential business of a painter to get good color, whether he imitates anything or not. At a distance from the picture, or carving, where the things represented become absolutely unintelligible, we must yet be able to say, at a glance, "That is good painting, or good carving."

And you will be surprised to find, when you try the experiment, how much the eye must instinctively judge in this manner. Take the front of San Zenone, for instance, Plate I. You will find it impossible, without a lens, to distinguish in the bronze gates, and in great part of the wall, anything

that their bosses represent. You cannot tell whether the sculpture is of men, animals, or trees; only you feel it to be composed of pleasant projecting masses; you acknowledge that both gates and wall are, somehow, delightfully roughened; and only afterwards, by slow degrees, can you make out what this roughness means; nay, though here (Plate III.) I magnify[10] one of the bronze plates of the gate to a scale, which gives you the same advantage as if you saw it quite close, in the reality,—you may still be obliged to me for the information that *this* boss represents the Madonna asleep in her little bed; and this smaller boss, the Infant Christ in His; and this at the top, a cloud with an angel coming out of it; and these jagged bosses, two of the Three Kings, with their crowns on, looking up to the star, (which is intelligible enough, I admit); but what this straggling, three-legged boss beneath signifies, I suppose neither you nor I can tell, unless it be the shepherd's dog, who has come suddenly upon the Kings with their crowns on, and is greatly startled at them.

23. Farther, and much more definitely, the pleasantness of the surface decoration is independent of structure; that is to say, of any architectural requirement of stability. The greater part of the sculpture here is exclusively ornamentation of a flat wall, or of door-paneling; only a small portion of the church front is thus treated, and the sculpture has no more to do with the form of the building than a piece of lace veil would have, suspended beside its gates on a festal day: the proportions of shaft and arch might be altered in a hundred different ways without diminishing their stability; and the pillars would stand more safely on the ground than on the backs of these carved animals.

24. I wish you especially to notice these points, because the false theory that ornamentation should be merely decorated structure is so pretty and plausible, that it is likely to take away your attention from the far more important abstract conditions of design. Structure should never be contradicted, and in the best buildings it is pleasantly exhibited and enforced: in this very porch the joints of every stone are visible, and you will find me in the Fifth Lecture insisting on this clearness of its anatomy as a merit; yet so independent is the mechanical structure of the true design, that when I begin my Lectures on Architecture, the first building I shall give you as a standard will be one in which the structure is wholly concealed. It will be the Baptistery of Florence, which is, in reality, as much a buttressed chapel with a vaulted roof, as the Chapter House of York;—but round it, in order to conceal that buttressed structure, (not to decorate, observe, but to *conceal*,) a flat external wall is raised; simplifying the whole to a mere hexagonal box, like a wooden piece of Tunbridge ware, on the surface of which the eye and intellect are to be interested by the relations of dimension and curve between pieces of incrusting marble of different colors, which have no more to do with the real make of the building than the diaper of a Harlequin's jacket has to do with his bones.

25. The sense of abstract proportion, on which the enjoyment of such a piece of art entirely depends, is one of the æsthetic faculties which nothing can develop but time and education. It belongs only to highly trained nations; and, among them, to their most strictly refined classes, though the germs of it are found, as part of their innate power, in every people capable of art. It has for the most part vanished at present from the English mind, in consequence of our eager desire for excitement, and for the kind of splendor that exhibits wealth, careless of dignity; so that, I suppose, there are very few now even of our best trained Londoners who know the difference between the design of Whitehall and that of any modern club-house in Pall Mall. The order and harmony which, in his enthusiastic account of the Theater of Epidaurus, Pausanias insists on before beauty, can only be recognized by stern order and harmony in our daily lives; and the perception of them is as little to be compelled, or taught suddenly, as the laws of still finer choice in the conception of dramatic incident which regulate poetic sculpture.

[10] Some of the most precious work done for me by my assistant, Mr. Burgess, during the course of these Lectures, consisted in making enlarged drawings from portions of photographs. Plate III. is engraved from a drawing of his, enlarged from the original photograph of which Plate I. is a reduction.

26. And now, at last, I think, we can sketch out the subject before us in a clear light. We have a structural art, divine and human, of which the investigation comes under the general term Anatomy; whether the junctions or joints be in mountains, or in branches of trees, or in buildings, or in bones of animals. We have next a musical art, falling into two distinct divisions—one using colors, the other masses, for its elements of composition; lastly, we have an imitative art, concerned with the representation of the outward appearances of things. And, for many reasons, I think it best to begin with imitative Sculpture; that being defined as *the art which, by the musical disposition of masses, imitates anything of which the imitation is justly pleasant to us; and does so in accordance with structural laws having due reference to the materials employed*.

So that you see our task will involve the immediate inquiry what the things are of which the imitation is justly pleasant to us: what, in few words,—if we are to be occupied in the making of graven images,—we ought to like to make images *of*. Secondly, after having determined its subject, what degree of imitation or likeness we ought to desire in our graven image; and, lastly, under what limitations demanded by structure and material, such likeness may be obtained.

These inquiries I shall endeavor to pursue with you to some practical conclusion, in my next four Lectures; and in the sixth, I will briefly sketch the actual facts that have taken place in the development of sculpture by the two greatest schools of it that hitherto have existed in the world.

27. The tenor of our next Lecture, then, must be an inquiry into the real nature of Idolatry; that is to say, the invention and service of Idols: and, in the interval, may I commend to your own thoughts this question, not wholly irrelevant, yet which I cannot pursue; namely, whether the God to whom we have so habitually prayed for deliverance "from battle, murder, and sudden death," *is* indeed, seeing that the present state of Christendom is the result of a thousand years' praying to that effect, "as the gods of the heathen who were but idols;" or whether—(and observe, one or other of these things *must* be true)—whether our prayers to Him have been, by this much, worse than Idolatry;—that heathen prayer was true prayer to false gods; and our prayers have been false prayers to the True One?

LECTURE II.
IDOLATRY

November, 1870

28. Beginning with the simple conception of sculpture as the art of fiction in solid substance, we are now to consider what its subject should be. What—having the gift of imagery—should we by preference endeavor to image? A question which is, indeed, subordinate to the deeper one—why we should wish to image anything at all.

29. Some years ago, having been always desirous that the education of women should begin in learning how to cook, I got leave, one day, for a little girl of eleven years old to exchange, much to her satisfaction, her schoolroom for the kitchen. But as ill-fortune would have it, there was some pastry toward, and she was left unadvisedly in command of some delicately rolled paste; whereof she made no pies, but an unlimited quantity of cats and mice.

Now you may read the works of the gravest critics of art from end to end; but you will find, at last, they can give you no other true account of the spirit of sculpture than that it is an irresistible human instinct for the making of cats and mice, and other imitable living creatures, in such permanent form that one may play with the images at leisure.

Play with them, or love them, or fear them, or worship them. The cat may become the goddess Pasht, and the mouse, in the hand of a sculptured king, enforce his enduring words "ες εμε τις όρεων ευσεβης εστω"; but the great mimetic instinct underlies all such purpose; and is zooplastic,—life-shaping,—alike in the reverent and the impious.

30. Is, I say, and has been, hitherto; none of us dare say that it will be. I shall have to show you hereafter that the greater part of the technic energy of men, as yet, has indicated a kind of childhood; and that the race becomes, if not more wise, at least more manly,[11] with every gained century. I can fancy that all this sculpturing and painting of ours may be looked back upon, in some distant time, as a kind of doll-making, and that the words of Sir Isaac Newton may be smiled at no more: only it will not be for stars that we desert our stone dolls, but for men. When the day comes, as come it must, in which we no more deface and defile God's image in living clay, I am not sure that we shall any of us care so much for the images made of Him, in burnt clay.

31. But, hitherto, the energy of growth in any people may be almost directly measured by their passion for imitative art; namely, for sculpture, or for the drama, which is living and speaking sculpture, or, as in Greece, for both; and in national as in actual childhood, it is not merely the *making*, but the *making-believe*; not merely the acting for the sake of the scene, but acting for the sake of acting, that is delightful. And, of the two mimetic arts, the drama, being more passionate, and involving conditions of greater excitement and luxury, is usually in its excellence the sign of culminating strength in the people; while fine sculpture, requiring always submission to severe law, is an unfailing proof of their being in early and active progress. *There is no instance of fine sculpture being produced by a nation either torpid, weak, or in decadence.* Their drama may gain in grace and wit; but their sculpture, in days of decline, is *always* base.

32. If my little lady in the kitchen had been put in command of colors, as well as of dough, and if the paste would have taken the colors, we may be sure her mice would have been painted brown, and her cats tortoiseshell; and this, partly indeed for the added delight and prettiness of color itself, but more for the sake of absolute realization to her eyes and mind. Now all the early sculpture of the

[11] Glance forward at once to § 75, read it, and return to this.

most accomplished nations has been thus colored, rudely or finely; and therefore you see at once how necessary it is that we should keep the term 'graphic' for imitative art generally; since no separation can at first be made between carving and painting, with reference to the mental powers exerted in, or addressed by, them. In the earliest known art of the world, a reindeer hunt may be scratched in outline on the flat side of a clean-picked bone, and a reindeer's head carved out of the end of it; both these are flint-knife work, and, strictly speaking, sculpture: but the scratched outline is the beginning of drawing, and the carved head of sculpture proper. When the spaces inclosed by the scratched outline are filled with color, the coloring soon becomes a principal means of effect; so that, in the engraving of an Egyptian-color bas-relief (S. 101), Rosellini has been content to miss the outlining incisions altogether, and represent it as a painting only. Its proper definition is, 'painting accented by sculpture;' on the other hand, in solid colored statues,—Dresden china figures, for example,—we have pretty sculpture accented by painting; the mental purpose in both kinds of art being to obtain the utmost degree of realization possible, and the ocular impression being the same, whether the delineation is obtained by engraving or painting. For, as I pointed out to you in my Fifth Lecture, everything is seen by the eye as patches of color, and of color only;—a fact which the Greeks knew well; so that when it becomes a question in the dialogue of Minos, "τινι οντι τη οψει ὁραται τα ὁρωμενα," the answer is "αισθησει ταυτη τη δια των οφθαλμων δηλουη ἡμιν τα χρωματα."—"What kind of power is the sight with which we see things? It is that sense which, through the eyes, can reveal *colors* to us."

33. And now observe that, while the graphic arts begin in the mere mimetic effort, they proceed, as they obtain more perfect realization, to act under the influence of a stronger and higher instinct. They begin by scratching the reindeer, the most interesting object of sight. But presently, as the human creature rises in scale of intellect, it proceeds to scratch, not the most interesting object of sight only, but the most interesting object of imagination; not the reindeer, but the Maker and Giver of the reindeer. And the second great condition for the advance of the art of sculpture is that the race should possess, in addition to the mimetic instinct, the realistic or idolizing instinct; the desire to see as substantial the powers that are unseen, and bring near those that are far off, and to possess and cherish those that are strange. To make in some way tangible and visible the nature of the gods—to illustrate and explain it by symbols; to bring the immortals out of the recesses of the clouds, and make them Penates; to bring back the dead from darkness, and make them Lares.

34. Our conception of this tremendous and universal human passion has been altogether narrowed by the current idea that Pagan religious art consisted only, or chiefly, in giving personality to the gods. The personality was never doubted; it was visibility, interpretation, and possession that the hearts of men sought. Possession, first of all—the getting hold of some hewn log of wild olive-wood that would fall on its knees if it was pulled from its pedestal—and, afterwards, slowly clearing manifestation; the exactly right expression is used in Lucian's dream,—Φειδιας εδειξε τον Δια; "Showed[12] Zeus;" manifested him; nay, in a certain sense, brought forth, or created, as you have it, in Anacreon's ode to the Rose, of the birth of Athena herself,—

πολεμοκλονον τ' Ἀθηνην
κορυφης εδεικνυε Ζευς

But I will translate the passage from Lucian to you at length—it is in every way profitable.

35. "There came to me, in the healing[13] night, a divine dream, so clear that it missed nothing of the truth itself; yes, and still after all this time, the shapes of what I saw remain in my sight, and the sound of what I heard dwells in my ears"—(note the lovely sense of εναυλος—the sound being as

[12] There is a primary and vulgar sense of 'exhibited' in Lucian's mind; but the higher meaning is involved in it.

[13] In the Greek, 'ambrosial.' Recollect always that ambrosia, as food of gods, is the continual restorer of strength; that all food is ambrosial when it nourishes, and that the night is called 'ambrosial' because it restores strength to the soul through its peace, as, in the 23d Psalm, the stillness of waters.

of a stream passing always by in the same channel)—"so distinct was everything to me. Two women laid hold of my hands and pulled me, each towards herself, so violently, that I had like to have been pulled asunder; and they cried out against one another,—the one, that she resolved to have me to herself, being indeed her own; and the other, that it was vain for her to claim what belonged to others; —and the one who first claimed me for her own was like a hard worker, and had strength as a man's; and her hair was dusty, and her hand full of horny places, and her dress fastened tight about her, and the folds of it loaded with white marble-dust, so that she looked just as my uncle used to look when he was filing stones: but the other was pleasant in features, and delicate in form, and orderly in her dress; and so, in the end, they left it to me to decide, after hearing what they had to say, with which of them I would go; and first the hard-featured and masculine one spoke:—

36. "'Dear child, I am the Art of Image-sculpture, which yesterday you began to learn; and I am as one of your own people, and of your house, for your grandfather' (and she named my mother's father) 'was a stone-cutter; and both your uncles had good name through me: and if you will keep yourself well clear of the sillinesses and fluent follies that come from this creature,' (and she pointed to the other woman,) 'and will follow me, and live with me, first of all, you shall be brought up as a man should be, and have strong shoulders; and, besides that, you shall be kept well quit of all restless desires, and you shall never be obliged to go away into any foreign places, leaving your own country and the people of your house; *neither shall all men praise you for your talk*.[14] And you must not despise this rude serviceableness of my body, neither this meanness of my dusty dress; for, pushing on in their strength from such things as these, that great Phidias revealed Zeus, and Polyclitus wrought out Hera, and Myron was praised, and Praxiteles marveled at: therefore are these men worshiped with the gods.'"

37. There is a beautiful ambiguity in the use of the preposition with the genitive in this last sentence. "Pushing on from these things" means indeed, justly, that the sculptors rose from a mean state to a noble one; but not as *leaving* the mean state,—not as, from a hard life, attaining to a soft one, —but as being helped and strengthened by the rough life to do what was greatest. Again, "worshiped with the gods" does not mean that they are thought of as in any sense equal to, or like to, the gods, but as being on the side of the gods against what is base and ungodly; and that the kind of worth which is in them is therefore indeed worshipful, as having its source with the gods. Finally, observe that every one of the expressions used of the four sculptors is definitely the best that Lucian could have chosen. Phidias carved like one who had seen Zeus, and had only to *reveal* him; Polyclitus, in labor of intellect, completed his sculpture by just law, and *wrought* out Hera; Myron was of all most *praised*, because he did best what pleased the vulgar; and Praxiteles the most *wondered at*, or admired, because he bestowed utmost exquisiteness of beauty.

38. I am sorry not to go on with the dream: the more refined lady, as you may remember, is liberal or gentlemanly Education, and prevails at last; so that Lucian becomes an author instead of a sculptor, I think to his own regret, though to our present benefit. One more passage of his I must refer you to, as illustrative of the point before us; the description of the temple of the Syrian Hieropolis, where he explains the absence of the images of the sun and moon. "In the temple itself," he says, "on the left hand as one goes in, there is set first the throne of the sun; but no form of him is thereon, for of these two powers alone, the sun and the moon, they show no carved images. And I also learned why this is their law, for they say that it is permissible, indeed, to make of the other gods, graven images, since the forms of them are not visible to all men. But Helios and Selenaia are everywhere clear-bright, and all men behold them; what need is there therefore for sculptured work of these, who appear in the air?"

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[14] I have italicized this final promise of blessedness, given by the noble Spirit of Workmanship. Compare Carlyle's fifth Latter-day Pamphlet, throughout; but especially pp. 12-14, in the first edition.

39. This, then, is the second instinct necessary to sculpture; the desire for the manifestation, description, and companionship of unknown powers; and for possession of a bodily substance—the 'bronze Strasbourg,' which you can embrace, and hang immortelles on the head of—instead of an abstract idea. But if you get nothing more in the depth of the national mind than these two feelings, the mimetic and idolizing instincts, there may be still no progress possible for the arts except in delicacy of manipulation and accumulative caprice of design. You must have not only the idolizing instinct, but an εθος which chooses the right thing to idolize! Else, you will get states of art like those in China or India, non-progressive, and in great part diseased and frightful, being wrought under the influence of foolish terror, or foolish admiration. So that a third condition, completing and confirming both the others, must exist in order to the development of the creative power.

40. This third condition is that the heart of the nation shall be set on the discovery of just or equal law, and shall be from day to day developing that law more perfectly. The Greek school of sculpture is formed during, and in consequence of, the national effort to discover the nature of justice; the Tuscan, during, and in consequence of, the national effort to discover the nature of justification. I assert to you at present briefly, what will, I hope, be the subject of prolonged illustration hereafter.

41. Now when a nation with mimetic instinct and imaginative longing is also thus occupied earnestly in the discovery of Ethic law, that effort gradually brings precision and truth into all its manual acts; and the physical progress of sculpture, as in the Greek, so in the Tuscan, school, consists in gradually *limiting* what was before indefinite, in *verifying* what was inaccurate, and in *humanizing* what was monstrous. I might perhaps content you by showing these external phenomena, and by dwelling simply on the increasing desire of naturalness, which compels, in every successive decade of years, literally, in the sculptured images, the mimicked bones to come together, bone to his bone; and the flesh to come up upon them, until from a flattened and pinched handful of clay, respecting which you may gravely question whether it was intended for a human form at all;—by slow degrees, and added touch to touch, in increasing consciousness of the bodily truth,—at last the Aphrodite of Melos stands before you, a perfect woman. But all that search for physical accuracy is merely the external operation, in the arts, of the seeking for truth in the inner soul; it is impossible without that higher effort, and the demonstration of it would be worse than useless to you, unless I made you aware at the same time of its spiritual cause.

42. Observe farther; the increasing truth in representation is correlative with increasing beauty in the thing to be represented. The pursuit of justice which regulates the imitative effort, regulates also the development of the race into dignity of person, as of mind; and their culminating art-skill attains the grasp of entire truth at the moment when the truth becomes most lovely. And then, ideal sculpture may go on safely into portraiture. But I shall not touch on the subject of portrait sculpture to-day; it introduces many questions of detail, and must be a matter for subsequent consideration.

43. These, then, are the three great passions which are concerned in true sculpture. I cannot find better, or, at least, more easily remembered, names for them than 'the Instincts of Mimicry, Idolatry, and Discipline;' meaning, by the last, the desire of equity and wholesome restraint, in all acts and works of life. Now of these, there is no question but that the love of Mimicry is natural and right, and the love of Discipline is natural and right. But it looks a grave question whether the yearning for Idolatry (the desire of companionship with images) is right. Whether, indeed, if such an instinct be essential to good sculpture, the art founded on it can possibly be 'fine' art.

44. I must now beg for your close attention, because I have to point out distinctions in modes of conception which will appear trivial to you, unless accurately understood; but of an importance in the history of art which cannot be overrated.

When the populace of Paris adorned the statue of Strasbourg with immortelles, none, even the simplest of the pious decorators, would suppose that the city of Strasbourg itself, or any spirit or ghost of the city, was actually there, sitting in the Place de la Concorde. The figure was delightful to

them as a visible nucleus for their fond thoughts about Strasbourg; but never for a moment supposed to *be* Strasbourg.

Similarly, they might have taken delight in a statue purporting to represent a river instead of a city,—the Rhine, or Garonne, suppose,—and have been touched with strong emotion in looking at it, if the real river were dear to them, and yet never think for an instant that the statue *was* the river.

And yet again, similarly, but much more distinctly, they might take delight in the beautiful image of a god, because it gathered and perpetuated their thoughts about that god; and yet never suppose, nor be capable of being deceived by any arguments into supposing, that the statue *was* the god.

On the other hand, if a meteoric stone fell from the sky in the sight of a savage, and he picked it up hot, he would most probably lay it aside in some, to him, sacred place, and believe the *stone itself* to be a kind of god, and offer prayer and sacrifice to it.

In like manner, any other strange or terrifying object, such, for instance, as a powerfully noxious animal or plant, he would be apt to regard in the same way; and very possibly also construct for himself frightful idols of some kind, calculated to produce upon him a vague impression of their being alive; whose imaginary anger he might deprecate or avert with sacrifice, although incapable of conceiving in them any one attribute of exalted intellectual or moral nature.

45. If you will now refer to §§ 52-9 of my Introductory Lectures, you will find this distinction between a resolute conception, recognized for such, and an involuntary apprehension of spiritual existence, already insisted on at some length. And you will see more and more clearly as we proceed, that the deliberate and intellectually commanded conception is not idolatrous in any evil sense whatever, but is one of the grandest and wholesomest functions of the human soul; and that the essence of evil idolatry begins only in the idea or belief of a real presence of any kind, in a thing in which there is no such presence.

46. I need not say that the harm of the idolatry must depend on the certainty of the negative. If there be a real presence in a pillar of cloud, in an unconsuming flame, or in a still small voice, it is no sin to bow down before these.

But, as matter of historical fact, the idea of such presence has generally been both ignoble and false, and confined to nations of inferior race, who are often condemned to remain for ages in conditions of vile terror, destitute of thought. Nearly all Indian architecture and Chinese design arise out of such a state: so also, though in a less gross degree, Ninevite and Phœnician art, early Irish, and Scandinavian; the latter, however, with vital elements of high intellect mingled in it from the first.

But the greatest races are never grossly subject to such terror, even in their childhood, and the course of their minds is broadly divisible into three distinct stages.

47. (I.) In their infancy they begin to imitate the real animals about them, as my little girl made the cats and mice, but with an under-current of partial superstition—a sense that there must be more in the creatures than they can see; also they catch up vividly any of the fancies of the baser nations round them, and repeat these more or less apishly, yet rapidly naturalizing and beautifying them. They then connect all kinds of shapes together, compounding meanings out of the old chimeras, and inventing new ones with the speed of a running wildfire; but always getting more of man into their images, and admitting less of monster or brute; their own characters, meanwhile, expanding and purging themselves, and shaking off the feverish fancy, as springing flowers shake the earth off their stalks.

48. (II.) In the second stage, being now themselves perfect men and women, they reach the conception of true and great gods as existent in the universe; and absolutely cease to think of them as in any wise present in statues or images; but they have now learned to make these statues beautifully human, and to surround them with attributes that may concentrate their thoughts of the gods. This is, in Greece, accurately the Pindaric time, just a little preceding the Phidian; the Phidian is already dimmed with a faint shadow of infidelity; still, the Olympic Zeus may be taken as a sufficiently central

type of a statue which was no more supposed to *be* Zeus, than the gold or elephants' tusks it was made of; but in which the most splendid powers of human art were exhausted in representing a believed and honored God to the happy and holy imagination of a sincerely religious people.

49. (III.) The third stage of national existence follows, in which, the imagination having now done its utmost, and being partly restrained by the sanctities of tradition, which permit no farther change in the conceptions previously created, begins to be superseded by logical deduction and scientific investigation. At the same moment, the elder artists having done all that is possible in realizing the national conceptions of the gods, the younger ones, forbidden to change the scheme of existing representations, and incapable of doing anything better in that kind, betake themselves to refine and decorate the old ideas with more attractive skill. Their aims are thus more and more limited to manual dexterity, and their fancy paralyzed. Also in the course of centuries, the methods of every art continually improving, and being made subjects of popular inquiry, praise is now to be got, for eminence in these, from the whole mob of the nation; whereas intellectual design can never be discerned but by the few. So that in this third era we find every kind of imitative and vulgar dexterity more and more cultivated; while design and imagination are every day less cared for, and less possible.

50. Meanwhile, as I have just said, the leading minds in literature and science become continually more logical and investigative; and once that they are established in the habit of testing facts accurately, a very few years are enough to convince all the strongest thinkers that the old imaginative religion is untenable, and cannot any longer be honestly taught in its fixed traditional form, except by ignorant persons. And at this point the fate of the people absolutely depends on the degree of moral strength into which their hearts have been already trained. If it be a strong, industrious, chaste, and honest race, the taking its old gods, or at least the old forms of them, away from it, will indeed make it deeply sorrowful and amazed; but will in no whit shake its will, nor alter its practice. Exceptional persons, naturally disposed to become drunkards, harlots, and cheats, but who had been previously restrained from indulging these dispositions by their fear of God, will, of course, break out into open vice, when that fear is removed. But the heads of the families of the people, instructed in the pure habits and perfect delights of an honest life, and to whom the thought of a Father in heaven had been a comfort, not a restraint, will assuredly not seek relief from the discomfort of their orphanage by becoming uncharitable and vile. Also the high leaders of their thought gather their whole strength together in the gloom; and at the first entrance to this Valley of the Shadow of Death, look their new enemy full in the eyeless face of him, and subdue him, and his terror, under their feet. "Metus omnes, et inexorabile fatum,… strepitumque Acherontis avari." This is the condition of national soul expressed by the art, and the words, of Holbein, Dürer, Shakspeare, Pope, and Goethe.

51. But if the people, at the moment when the trial of darkness approaches, be not confirmed in moral character, but are only maintaining a superficial virtue by the aid of a spectral religion; the moment the staff of their faith is broken, the character of the race falls like a climbing plant cut from its hold: then all the earthliest vices attack it as it lies in the dust; every form of sensual and insane sin is developed; and half a century is sometimes enough to close in hopeless shame the career of the nation in literature, art, and war.

52. Notably, within the last hundred years, all religion has perished from the practically active national mind of France and England. No statesman in the senate of either country would dare to use a sentence out of their acceptedly divine Revelation, as having now a literal authority over them for their guidance, or even a suggestive wisdom for their contemplation. England, especially, has cast her Bible full in the face of her former God; and proclaimed, with open challenge to Him, her resolved worship of His declared enemy, Mammon. All the arts, therefore, founded on religion and sculpture chiefly, are here in England effete and corrupt, to a degree which arts never were hitherto in the history of mankind; and it is possible to show you the condition of sculpture living, and sculpture dead, in accurate opposition, by simply comparing the nascent Pisan school in Italy with the existing school in England.

53. You were perhaps surprised at my placing in your educational series, as a type of original Italian sculpture, the pulpit by Niccola Pisano in the Duomo of Siena. I would rather, had it been possible, have given the pulpit by Giovanni Pisano in the Duomo of Pisa; but that pulpit is dispersed in fragments through the upper galleries of the Duomo, and the cloister of the Campo Santo; and the casts of its fragments now put together at Kensington are too coarse to be of use to you. You may partly judge, however, of the method of their execution by the eagle's head, which I have sketched from the marble in the Campo Santo (Edu., No. 113), and the lioness with her cubs (Edu., No. 103, more carefully studied at Siena); and I will get you other illustrations in due time. Meanwhile, I want you to compare the main purpose of the Cathedral of Pisa, and its associated Bell Tower, Baptistery, and Holy Field, with the main purpose of the principal building lately raised for the people of London. In these days, we indeed desire no cathedrals; but we have constructed an enormous and costly edifice, which, in claiming educational influence over the whole London populace, and middle class, is verily the Metropolitan cathedral of this century,—the Crystal Palace.

54. It was proclaimed, at its erection, an example of a newly discovered style of architecture, greater than any hitherto known,—our best popular writers, in their enthusiasm, describing it as an edifice of Fairyland. You are nevertheless to observe that this novel production of fairy enchantment is destitute of every kind of sculpture, except the bosses produced by the heads of nails and rivets; while the Duomo of Pisa, in the wreathen work of its doors, in the foliage of its capitals, inlaid color designs of its façade, embossed panels of its Baptistery font, and figure sculpture of its two pulpits, contained the germ of a school of sculpture which was to maintain, through a subsequent period of four hundred years, the greatest power yet reached by the arts of the world, in description of Form, and expression of Thought.

55. Now it is easy to show you the essential cause of the vast discrepancy in the character of these two buildings.

In the vault of the apse of the Duomo of Pisa was a colossal image of Christ, in colored mosaic, bearing to the temple, as nearly as possible, the relation which the statue of Athena bore to the Parthenon; and in the same manner, concentrating the imagination of the Pisan on the attributes of the God in whom he believed.

In precisely the same position with respect to the nave of the building, but of larger size, as proportioned to the three or four times greater scale of the whole, a colossal piece of sculpture was placed by English designers, at the extremity of the Crystal Palace, in preparation for their solemnities in honor of the birthday of Christ, in December 1867 or 1868.

That piece of sculpture was the face of the clown in a pantomime, some twelve feet high from brow to chin, which face, being moved by the mechanism which is our pride, every half-minute opened its mouth from ear to ear, showed its teeth, and revolved its eyes, the force of these periodical seasons of expression being increased and explained by the illuminated inscription underneath, "Here we are again."

56. When it is assumed, and with too good reason, that the mind of the English populace is to be addressed, in the principal Sacred Festival of its year, by sculpture such as this, I need scarcely point out to you that the hope is absolutely futile of advancing their intelligence by collecting within this building (itself devoid absolutely of every kind of art, and so vilely constructed that those who traverse it are continually in danger of falling over the cross-bars that bind it together,) examples of sculpture filched indiscriminately from the past work, bad and good, of Turks, Greeks, Romans, Moors, and Christians, miscolored, misplaced, and misinterpreted;[15] here thrust into unseemly corners, and there mortised together into mere confusion of heterogeneous obstacle; pronouncing itself hourly more

[15] "Falsely represented," would be the better expression. In the cast of the tomb of Queen Eleanor, for a single instance, the Gothic foliage, of which one essential virtue is its change over every shield, is represented by a repetition of casts from one mold, of which the design itself is entirely conjectural.

intolerable in weariness, until any kind of relief is sought from it in steam wheelbarrows or cheap toyshops; and most of all in beer and meat, the corks and the bones being dropped through the chinks in the damp deal flooring of the English Fairy Palace.

57. But you will probably think me unjust in assuming that a building prepared only for the amusement of the people can typically represent the architecture or sculpture of modern England. You may urge that I ought rather to describe the qualities of the refined sculpture which is executed in large quantities for private persons belonging to the upper classes, and for sepulchral and memorial purposes. But I could not now criticise that sculpture with any power of conviction to you, because I have not yet stated to you the principles of good sculpture in general. I will, however, in some points, tell you the facts by anticipation.

58. We have much excellent portrait sculpture; but portrait sculpture, which is nothing more, is always third-rate work, even when produced by men of genius;—nor does it in the least require men of genius to produce it. To paint a portrait, indeed, implies the very highest gifts of painting; but any man, of ordinary patience and artistic feeling, can carve a satisfactory bust.

59. Of our powers in historical sculpture, I am, without question, just, in taking for sufficient evidence the monuments we have erected to our two greatest heroes by sea and land; namely, the Nelson Column, and the statue of the Duke of Wellington opposite Apsley House. Nor will you, I hope, think me severe,—certainly, whatever you may think me, I am using only the most temperate language, in saying of both these monuments, that they are absolutely devoid of high sculptural merit. But consider how much is involved in the fact thus dispassionately stated, respecting the two monuments in the principal places of our capital, to our two greatest heroes.

60. Remember that we have before our eyes, as subjects of perpetual study and thought, the art of all the world for three thousand years past; especially, we have the best sculpture of Greece, for example of bodily perfection; the best of Rome, for example of character in portraiture; the best of Florence, for example of romantic passion; we have unlimited access to books and other sources of instruction; we have the most perfect scientific illustrations of anatomy, both human and comparative; and we have bribes for the reward of success, large in the proportion of at least twenty to one, as compared with those offered to the artists of any other period. And with all these advantages, and the stimulus also of fame carried instantly by the press to the remotest corners of Europe, the best efforts we can make, on the grandest of occasions, result in work which it is impossible in any one particular to praise.

Now consider for yourselves what an intensity of the negation of the faculty of sculpture this implies in the national mind! What measure can be assigned to the gulf of incapacity, which can deliberately swallow up in the gorge of it the teaching and example of three thousand years, and produce, as the result of that instruction, what it is courteous to call 'nothing'?

61. That is the conclusion at which we arrive on the evidence presented by our historical sculpture. To complete the measure of ourselves, we must endeavor to estimate the rank of the two opposite schools of sculpture employed by us in the nominal service of religion, and in the actual service of vice.

I am aware of no statue of Christ, nor of any apostle of Christ, nor of any scene related in the New Testament, produced by us within the last three hundred years, which has possessed even superficial merit enough to attract public attention.

Whereas the steadily immoral effect of the formative art which we learn, more or less apishly, from the French schools, and employ, but too gladly, in manufacturing articles for the amusement of the luxurious classes, must be ranked as one of the chief instruments used by joyful fiends and angry fates for the ruin of our civilization.

If, after I have set before you the nature and principles of true sculpture, in Athens, Pisa, and Florence, you consider these facts,—(which you will then at once recognize as such),—you will find that they absolutely justify my assertion that the state of sculpture in modern England, as compared

with that of the great Ancients, is literally one of corrupt and dishonorable death, as opposed to bright and fameful life.

62. And now, will you bear with me while I tell you finally why this is so?

The cause with which you are personally concerned is your own frivolity; though essentially this is not your fault, but that of the system of your early training. But the fact remains the same, that here, in Oxford, you, a chosen body of English youth, in nowise care for the history of your country, for its present dangers, or its present duties. You still, like children of seven or eight years old, are interested only in bats, balls, and oars: nay, including with you the students of Germany and France, it is certain that the general body of modern European youth have their minds occupied more seriously by the sculpture and painting of the bowls of their tobacco-pipes, than by all the divinest workmanship and passionate imagination of Greece, Rome, and Mediæval Christendom.

63. But the elementary causes, both of this frivolity in you, and of worse than frivolity in older persons, are the two forms of deadly Idolatry which are now all but universal in England.

The first of these is the worship of the Eidolon, or Fantasm of Wealth; worship of which you will find the nature partly examined in the thirty-seventh paragraph of my 'Munera Pulveris'; but which is briefly to be defined as the servile apprehension of an active power in Money, and the submission to it as the God of our life.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.