

appointed place; passes through life without consciousness, to death without bitterness; wears the beauty of youth, without its passion; and declines to the weakness of age, without its regret.

*Begin  
here* →

§ 3. And in this mystery of intermediate being, entirely subordinate to us, with which we can deal as we choose, having just the greater power as we have the less responsibility for our treatment of the unsuffering creature, most of the pleasures which we need from the external world are gathered, and most of the lessons we need are written,<sup>1</sup> all kinds of precious grace and teaching being united in this link between the Earth and Man; wonderful in universal adaptation to his need, desire, and discipline; God's daily preparation of the earth for him, with beautiful means of life. First, a carpet to make it soft for him; then, a coloured fantasy of embroidery thereon; then, tall spreading of foliage to shade him from sun heat, and shade also the fallen rain, that it may not dry quickly back into the clouds, but stay to nourish the springs among the moss.

<sup>1</sup> [Ruskin here curtailed in revising. The MS. has the following additional passage:—

"... are written. Animals are wayward teachers; we cannot always tell what they are meant to say to us; it looks as if the bee rather overdid her pattern things of industry: and one would be glad if the sheep were a little more intelligent in her innocence, and knew a little better what she was about. But a tree can do no wrong, cannot fall short in any way of being what it ought to be: if it fails in any wise, we know it is its misfortune, not its fault: and we can learn of it nothing but the truth and right, under any circumstances. So also we need not be under any troublesome remorse in putting it to our service. We may ill-treat it, forget it, starve it, overwork it, and yet have no weight of misery laid at our door, and if we waste its goodness, we shall in the end suffer for it ourselves only, which it is satisfactory to generous people to know—when they have ill-treated any creatures. And the more we think of it, the more wonderful appears this link between the Earth and Man; wonderful in its universal adaptation to his need, desire, and discipline. To his need—for it is his food, his clothing, his shade, and his heat. Of serviceable animals, those are most necessary to him which feed most on plants—which are, in fact, little more than vital transferring powers, turning the pasture into milk, or refining the mulberry leaf into thread. But supposing no animals existed at all, so long as man has corn, wine, fruit, flax, cotton, and wood, of which coal is only a compressed and undecaying form, his life is possible to him, and may be pleasurable. Plants are, in fact, the visible, beautiful means of life—God's preparation of the Earth before him daily. First, a carpet . . ."]

Stout wood to bear this leafage: easily to be cut, yet tough and light, to make houses for him, or instruments (lanceshaft, or plough-handle, according to his temper); useless it had been, if harder; useless, if less fibrous; useless, if less elastic. Winter comes, and the shade of leafage falls away, to let the sun warm the earth; the strong boughs remain, breaking the strength of winter winds. The seeds which are to prolong the race, innumerable according to the need, are made beautiful and palatable, varied into infinitude of appeal to the fancy of man, or provision for his service: cold juice, or glowing spice, or balm, or incense, softening oil, preserving resin, medicine of styptic, febrifuge, or lulling charm: and all these presented in forms of endless change. Fragility or force, softness and strength, in all degrees and aspects; unerring uprightness, as of temple pillars, or unguided wandering of feeble tendrils on the ground; mighty resistances of rigid arm and limb to the storms of ages, or wavings to and fro with faintest pulse of summer streamlet. Roots cleaving the strength of rock, or binding the transience of the sand; crests basking in sunshine of the desert, or hiding by dripping spring and lightless cave; foliage far tossing in entangled fields beneath every wave of ocean—clothing, with variegated, everlasting films, the peaks of the trackless mountains, or ministering at cottage doors to every gentlest passion and simplest joy of humanity.

§ 4. Being thus prepared for us in all ways, and made beautiful, and good for food, and for building, and for instruments of our hands, this race of plants, deserving boundless affection and admiration from us, becomes, in proportion to their obtaining it, a nearly perfect test of our being in right temper of mind and way of life; so that no one can be far wrong in either who loves the trees enough, and every one is assuredly wrong in both who does not love them, if his life has brought them in his way. It is clearly possible to do without them, for the great companionship of the sea and sky are all that sailors need; and many a noble heart has been taught the best it had to learn between

dark stone walls. Still if human life be cast among trees at all, the love borne to them is a sure test of its purity. And it is a sorrowful proof of the mistaken ways of the world that the "country," in the simple sense of a place of fields and trees, has hitherto been the source of reproach to its inhabitants, and that the words "countryman, rustic, clown, paysan, villager," still signify a rude and untaught person, as opposed to the words "townsman" and "citizen."<sup>1</sup> We accept this usage of words, or the evil which it signifies, somewhat too quietly; as if it were quite necessary and natural that country-people should be rude, and townspeople gentle. Whereas I believe that the result of each mode of life may, in some stages of the world's progress, be the exact reverse; and that another use of words may be forced upon us by a new aspect of facts, so that we may find ourselves saying: "Such and such a person is very gentle and kind—he is quite rustic; and such and such another person is very rude and ill-taught—he is quite urbane."

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§ 5. At all events, cities have hitherto gained the better part of their good report through our evil ways of going on in the world generally, chiefly and eminently through our bad habit of fighting with each other. No field, in the Middle Ages, being safe from devastation, and every country lane yielding easier passage to the marauders, peacefully-minded men necessarily congregated in cities, and walled themselves in, making as few cross-country roads as possible: while the men who sowed and reaped the harvests of Europe were only the servants or slaves of the barons. The disdain of all agricultural pursuits by the nobility, and of all plain facts by the monks, kept educated Europe in a state of mind over which natural phenomena could have no power; body and intellect being lost in the practice of war without purpose, and the meditation of words without meaning. Men learned the dexterity with sword and syllogism, which they

<sup>1</sup> [In writing to his father from Lucerne (October 28, 1861) Ruskin says:

"In the first chapter of my fifth volume, in speaking of the names of country people which have a reproachful signification, I believe I missed 'villain.' It should be put in the margin."]

*Begin here* →

And, first, let us understand what composition is, and how far it is required.

§ 4. Composition may be best defined as the help of everything in the picture by everything else.

I wish the reader to dwell a little on this word "Help." It is a grave one.

In substance which we call "inanimate," as of clouds, or stones, their atoms may cohere to each other, or consist with each other, but they do not help each other. The removal of one part does not injure the rest.

But in a plant, the taking away of any one part does injure the rest. Hurt or remove any portion of the sap, bark, or pith, the rest is injured. If any part enters into a state in which it no more assists the rest, and has thus become "helpless," we call it also "dead."

The power which causes the several portions of the plant to help each other, we call life. Much more is this so in an animal. We may take away the branch of a tree without much harm to it; but not the animal's limb. Thus, intensity of life is also intensity of helpfulness—completeness of depending of each part on all the rest. The ceasing of this help is what we call corruption; and in proportion to the perfectness of the help, is the dreadfulness of the loss. The more intense the life has been, the more terrible is its corruption.

The decomposition of a crystal is not necessarily impure

to use, in this final section of it, the word "invention," and to reserve the term "composition" for that false composition which can be taught on principles; as I have already so employed the term in the chapter on "Imagination Associative," in the second volume. I But, in arranging this section, I find it is not conveniently possible to avoid the ordinary modes of parlance; I therefore only head the section as I intended (and as is, indeed, best), using in the text the ordinarily accepted term; only the reader must be careful to note that what I spoke of shortly as "composition" in the chapters on "Imagination," I here always call, distinctly, "false composition"; using here, as I find most convenient, the words "invention" or "composition" indifferently, for the true faculty.

<sup>1</sup> [See in this edition, Vol. IV. p. 231.]

at all. The fermentation of a wholesome liquid begins to admit the idea slightly; the decay of leaves yet more; of flowers, more; of animals, with greater painfulness and terribleness in exact proportion to their original vitality; and the foulest of all corruption is that of the body of man; and, in his body, that which is occasioned by disease, more than that of natural death.

§ 5. I said just now, that though atoms of inanimate substance could not help each other, they could "consist" with each other. "Consistence" is their virtue. Thus the parts of a crystal are consistent, but of dust, inconsistent. Orderly adherence, the best help its atoms can give, constitutes the nobleness of such substance.

When matter is either consistent, or living, we call it pure, or clean; when inconsistent or corrupting (unhelpful), we call it impure, or unclean. The greatest uncleanliness being that which is essentially most opposite to life.

Life and consistency, then, both expressing one character (namely, helpfulness of a higher or lower order), the Maker of all creatures and things, "by whom all creatures live, and all things consist,"<sup>1</sup> is essentially and for ever the Helpful One, or in softer Saxon, the "Holy" One.<sup>2</sup>

The word has no other ultimate meaning: Helpful, harmless, undefiled: "living" or "Lord of life."

The idea is clear and mighty in the cherubim's cry: "Helpful, helpful, helpful, Lord God of Hosts";<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* of all the hosts, armies, and creatures of the earth.\*

\* "The cries of them which have reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (of all the creatures of the earth)."<sup>4</sup> You will find a wonderful clearness come into many texts by reading, habitually, "helpful" and "helpfulness" for "holy" and "holiness" or else "living," as in Rom. xi. 16. The sense "dedicated" (the Latin *sanctus*), being, of course, inapplicable to the Supreme Being, is an entirely secondary and accidental one.

<sup>1</sup> [See Colossians i. 16, 17: compare below, p. 482.]

<sup>2</sup> [On this suggested connexion of "holy" and "helpful," compare *Munera Pulveris* Appendix ii.]

<sup>3</sup> [From the *Te Deum*, Ruskin translating "Sabaoth" into "Hosts"; see also Revelation iv. 8.]

<sup>4</sup> [James v. 4.]

§ 6. A pure or holy state of anything, therefore, is that in which all its parts are helpful or consistent. They may or may not be homogeneous. The highest or organic purities are composed of many elements in an entirely helpful state. The highest and first law of the universe—and the other name of life is, therefore, “help.” The other name of death is “separation.” Government and co-operation are in all things and eternally the laws of life. Anarchy and competition, eternally, and in all things, the laws of death.<sup>1</sup>

§ 7. Perhaps the best, though the most familiar example we could take of the nature and power of consistence, will be that of the possible changes in the dust we tread on.

Exclusive of animal decay, we can hardly arrive at a more absolute type of impurity than the mud or slime of a damp, over-trodden path, in the outskirts of a manufacturing town. I do not say mud of the road, because that is mixed with animal refuse; but take merely an ounce or two of the blackest slime of a beaten footpath on a rainy day, near a large manufacturing town.

§ 8. That slime we shall find in most cases composed of clay (or brickdust, which is burnt clay) mixed with soot, a little sand, and water. All these elements are at helpless war with each other, and destroy reciprocally each other's nature and power, competing and fighting for place at every tread of your foot;—sand squeezing out clay, and clay squeezing out water, and soot meddling everywhere and defiling the whole. Let us suppose that this ounce of mud is left in perfect rest, and that its elements gather together, like to like, so that their atoms may get into the closest relations possible.

§ 9. Let the clay begin. Ridding itself of all foreign substance, it gradually becomes a white earth,<sup>2</sup> already very

<sup>1</sup> [In these sentences, said Ruskin (*Unto this Last*, § 54), “my principles of Political Economy were all summed.” See also *Ethics of the Dust*, § 120, where §§ 6–9 here are quoted, and Vol. XVI. p. 486.]

<sup>2</sup> [Ruskin in his copy for revision refers to a note on the white campanula in his diary for 1861–1863, where he describes how that flower “at first answers partly the purpose of its own calyx, showing itself just a little out of the calyx quite green,” till, “as it expands, it purifies itself to purer white slowly.”]

beautiful; and fit, with help of congealing fire, to be made into finest porcelain, and painted on, and be kept in kings' palaces. But such artificial consistence is not its best. Leave it still quiet to follow its own instinct of unity, and it becomes not only white, but clear; not only clear, but hard; nor only clear and hard, but so set that it can deal with light in a wonderful way, and gather out of it the loveliest blue rays only, refusing the rest. We call it then a sapphire.<sup>1</sup>

Such being the consummation of the clay, we give similar permission of quiet to the sand. It also becomes, first, a white earth, then proceeds to grow clear and hard, and at last arranges itself in mysterious, infinitely fine, parallel lines, which have the power of reflecting not merely the blue rays, but the blue, green, purple, and red rays in the greatest beauty in which they can be seen through any hard material whatsoever. We call it then an opal.<sup>2</sup>

In next order the soot sets to work; it cannot make itself white at first, but instead of being discouraged, tries harder and harder, and comes out clear at last, and the hardest thing in the world; and for the blackness that it had, obtains in exchange the power of reflecting all the rays of the sun at once in the vividest blaze that any solid thing can shoot. We call it then a diamond.

Last of all the water purifies or unites itself, contented enough if it only reach the form of a dew-drop,<sup>3</sup> but if we insist on its proceeding to a more perfect consistence, it crystallizes into the shape of a star.

And for the ounce of slime which we had by political economy of competition, we have by political economy of co-operation, a sapphire, an opal, and a diamond, set in the midst of a star of snow.

*End here* →

§ 10. Now invention in art signifies an arrangement, in

<sup>1</sup> [Ruskin takes this illustration of natural beauty more than once: see *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, § 12 (Vol. XII. p. 29), and *Ethics of the Dust*, § 45.]

<sup>2</sup> [For other references to the opal, see above, part vi. ch. x. § 1; *Seven Lamps* (Vol. VIII. p. 180); *Lectures on Art*, § 173; and *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 70.]

<sup>3</sup> [On the dew-drop and the diamond, compare again *Lectures on Art*, § 173.]