PART I
Part I

Letters 1 to 25

[1856]—February 19, 1866

The initial or introductory letters show the slow development of Ruskin’s friendship with Mrs. Cowper through their mutual interest in spiritualism—an interest not unattended on Ruskin’s part by a certain skepticism and even levity. This movement of the correspondence concludes with Ruskin’s attempting to effect a first meeting between Mrs. Cowper and the La Touche family, who resided in London during the winter of 1865-66. It is at Letter 25—dated February 19, 1866—that Ruskin is seen on the edge of a crisis in his relations with Rose La Touche. How this is reached might be briefly pointed out; to do so it is necessary to return to the early 1860’s.

In the late summer of 1861 Ruskin, paying his initial visit to Harristown, was already aware of his special interest in Rose. It was also a time when his faith in his deeply imbued evangelicalism was on trial. So sorely was he tried that he brought his spiritual problem to Mrs. La Touche, who, Ruskin later told his father,² made him promise not to indicate publicly any change in his spiritual attitude for the next ten

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1 To facilitate the reading of the manuscript the letters are divided into five parts. At appropriate intervals, the editor provides a brief commentary designed to place the correspondence that follows in perspective and to effect temporal connections between various phases of the letters.

2 Works, XXXIV, 662.
years. But one can be sure that Rose, who suffered mental disturbances as well as religious misgivings throughout the early sixties, knew of the grave problem agitating her admirer. Only a few months later, in May, 1862, Mrs. La Touche offered Ruskin a cottage adjoining the Harristown estate, but within two months of that time, in July, 1862, some altercation with the La Touches had occurred which caused Ruskin to remove to the Continent. As he wrote his close friend Paulina, Lady Trevelyan: “The Irish plan fell through in various unspeakable—somewhat sorrowful ways. I’ve had a fine quarrel with Rosie ever since for not helping me enough.”

This separation from Rose, although palliated by epistolary exchanges, was, both at the time and in retrospect, a great blow to Ruskin, as Letter 26 to Lady Mount-Temple indicates. There he speaks of it as rendering him “very close to death.” Also, in Letter 43—dated September 29, 1866—he maintains he has not had “one happy hour” since Rose’s parents separated him from her. And his diary for December 21, 1865, states clearly that he had not seen Rose for the past three years. Plainly, while permitting exchange of letters, Mr. and Mrs. La Touche came between their daughter and her lover.

That Ruskin suffered severely between 1862 and 1865 is also attested to by letters he addressed to that minor novelist and sometime parson, George MacDonald (1824-1905), to whom Mrs. La Touche introduced him in 1863 in the hope that MacDonald would exercise a beneficial influence over him. While MacDonald plays his most important role in this affair in 1872, he did advise and assist Ruskin in its earlier stages. And it is to him that the now notorious “mousepet” letter of February 8, 1865, is directed. Writing on his birthday, Ruskin says: “I can’t love anybody except my Mouse-pet in Ireland, who nibbles me to the very sick-death with weariness to see her.”

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3 Works, XXXIV, 414.
4 See Letter 37.
With the new year—1866—Ruskin saw a good deal of Rose and on February 2, proposed to her, only to be told that he must wait three years—until she became of age. February 2 remained a hallowed day for Ruskin ever after, as is apparent, for example, from his public notice of it in *Fors Clavigera* in 1877\(^7\) and in 1879\(^8\) when writing Gladstone's daughter. It is with the refusal of his hand in February, 1866, then, that Ruskin turns to Mrs. Cowper for assistance, thus initiating the outpouring of his emotions, a torrent that is to rage for the next several years.

\(^7\) *Works*, XXIX, 60.
Dear Mr Cowper

I am very sorry but I cannot: I am oppressed with work just now, & those late town dinners are equivalent to the loss of a day, or nearly so,—to a person whose usual bedtime is ten oclock.

Most truly Yours,

With compliments to Mrs Cowper

J Ruskin.
Denmark Hill
Tuesday.
[1856–65]¹⁰

Dear Mr Cowper,

I shall have much pleasure in accepting Lord and Lady Palmerston’s kind invitation—and hope to meet you with faithful punctuality at the Waterloo station on Friday—With best remembrances to Mrs Cowper believe me

faithfully Yours

J Ruskin

The Hon. W. Cowper

¹⁰ The formality of this note and the death of Palmerston in 1865 suggest the date ascribed.
Dear Mrs Cowper

I am set upon this talk you promised me, and mean to try for it again tomorrow a little before 12, and it will be of no use to be out—for you’ll only have it hanging over you for a fortnight—so you had better get it over—if so it may be—With affectionate [sic] regards—faithfully yours & Mr Cowpers,

J. Ruskin

—Seriously—you need not mind if you have to be out. I shall be back in ten days from the country, and can then come any day.

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11 The conjectural date is based on the year, 1862, written—not in Ruskin’s hand—in the top right corner of the manuscript. Save for part of November and December of this year Ruskin was in England only from December 31, 1861, until May 15, 1862.
Dear Mrs Cowper

I do not know when I have been so vexed, but it is merely impossible to me to come tonight. I did not think of saying "not Thursday" because I had no idea of the thing's being arranged so magnetically quick,—but my sick father & lame mother come home today after four months living up at Norwood, & count upon my dining and passing the evening with them—any other day would have done and will do, but I should have to vex them mightily and I prefer to vex myself and inconvenience you.—I will keep myself wholly free after this—don't give me up.

Ever gratefully Yours
J Ruskin

12 This unsatisfactory date is based on internal evidence regarding the health of the older Ruskins. In October, 1860, Margaret Ruskin incurred lasting lameness from a severe fall; but as late as January 19, 1862 (Norton, I, 125) Ruskin senior was healthy enough. It is likely, then, that this letter was written after the latter date and, of course, before March, 1864, when John James Ruskin died. However, because it seems clear that Ruskin wrote this letter from London, the date can be further restricted to the following time periods: January 19, 1862 to May, 1862; November, 1862; June to early September, 1863; November 14-23, 1863; and December 19, 1863, to March, 1864.
Dear Mrs. Cowper,—Thank you for your pretty letter—I'll come and dine, then; there's always a sense of hurry after breakfast. But it will be ten days or a fortnight, yet, before I can get home. I will write to you as soon as I know, and then you have only to tell me your day. Don't tremble; if I can be of use to you at all, it will be in casting out all Fear. If I hurt you it can only be in crushing an uncertain hope. If it should seem even that the Faith of Virgil was founded as firmly as Dante's, and more reasonably, it might be conceived as not the less happy.—With sincere regards to Mr. Cowper, ever faithfully yours,

J. Ruskin.
Dear Mrs Cowper

I could not answer in time for post yesterday. I shall leave this at Curzon St & await your return.

I have read that book, (much of it) with much pain; therefore—seriously I will follow up the enquiry in any way in which you can aid me to do so, but I suspect you will find me interrupt all Immaterial proceedings—not from incredulity: but from stupid Solidity. You will find me a fatal Non conductor,—I can neither see nor feel my way anywhere just now.

Thank you for your sympathy in respect of Turner—but you do not know what I have had to bear. Remember, all his great pictures are decayed to absolute death—speaking of colour as living, and all his drawings are being destroyed by picture dealers, or in the National gallery by mildew. I want to speak to you about this the first thing: for unless you can get Lord Palmerston to order something—the whole mass of Turner's drawings in the national gallery will be irreparably destroyed—half their value is gone already; they were exposed without a fire in the low room of the gallery during the repairs of it—all the winter—and are fatally injured—only now in a measure to be saved by the most active superintendence. I can do nothing—being too ill but the Trustees have I believe a notion that I want to be Curator—or to appoint a Curator. All I care for is to be quit of responsibility.

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14 Textual evidence suggests the date of this letter. Toward its conclusion Ruskin speaks of "this stabbing," which in all probability refers to the apprehension of a man named Stephenson, on December 16, 1863, for damaging Turner's "Regulus Leaving Rome." Stephenson was committed for trial on January 4, 1864, and received six months hard labor. The damage, according to the records of the National Gallery, consisted of "a cut an inch and a quarter long, four stabs [italics mine] and four slight chips, the paint being broken off but the canvas not pierced."
for I have other work on my hands now—but I must write to the Times about it to do my mere duty to the public—(unless you can persuade Lord Palmerston to interfere)—and then there would probably be all sorts of trouble—and no good done—only I can’t see the whole National property destroyed without saying so.—The stabbing pictures is nothing—one “cleaner” does more harm in an hour than a charge of bayonets and a volley of grape would:—and my mind has been long made up to the destruction of the whole—So that this stabbing is to me just what the prick of a pin would be to a man who had had his flesh cut off his bones in little bits—as far as a multitude of Shylocks could do it without any Portia conditions—except just that they must leave him alive, or a little alive.

—Sincere regards to Mr Cowper
—Always faithfully Yours,

J Ruskin.

I am heartily glad to hear of better health at Broadlands. Every one has been ill, of people whom I should like to be well. Wicked people are never ill, I think. But once I should have thought the gout came to punish Lord P. for not helping Poland.

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15 Which he had done before, in 1856 (Works, XIII, xxxii). On this occasion, however, Palmerston appears not to have interceded.

16 Earlier in 1863, at the time of the Polish uprising against the Russians.
Dear Mrs Cowper

I should have liked—so much—to have come. I would—even after my happy savage life, have endured the tyrannies of London dinner—to meet Maurice,18 and after long time—Gladstone19—and to have had the luxury, in my extreme sulkiness, of making myself as disagreeable to my old acquaintances as anybody could be—in so gracious a presence as yours (or as any insignificant person could be to significant ones). But my old Oxford tutor Osborne Gordon20 is coming up from Windsor to dine with me, and my great and good painter-friend Rossetti from his den in Cheyne walk, and there’s no re-arrangement nor ordination possible. So I look for your sympathy of sunshine with what little remains of good in me, in the morning, and forego the delights of being discomfortable and discomfited.

But it’s too bad of you to take advantage of my Clerkmanship in that way, and I was really rather proud of my C-s before—and thought they nodded goodhumouredly at people, and then, to take one [illegible] for the letter I can’t say—the dogs letter too—you wicked—ungenerous—graciousness—I couldn’t have thought it of you! I won’t be—if you do such a thing again—any more faithfully yours,

J Ruskin

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17 This conjectural date is suggested by internal evidence. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), the Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter, did not move to Cheyne Walk until late in 1862. And by 1865 his friendship with Ruskin was extremely tenuous. Thus it is only between the dates suggested that the letter could have been written.

18 Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-72), controversial divine and founder, in 1854, of the Working Men’s College at which Ruskin taught and lectured. The most interesting phase of Maurice’s relationship with Ruskin is perhaps that concerning Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds (see Works, XII, 509-72; note especially pp. 561-68).

19 William Ewart Gladstone (1809-98), four times Prime Minister.

20 Gordon (1813-83) was Censor of Christ Church, Oxford, and in 1860 was granted the living at Easthampstead, Berks., a parish close to Windsor.
Dear Mrs. Cowper,—I can dine with you any day after Monday next week, if you are alone; but I want to talk about the Turners, so please don’t let anybody else come. I had a long talk with Carlyle yesterday. He says Spiritualism is real witchcraft, and quite wrong (Wicked he meant—no, I mean, he said). It is all very wonderful; I have a great notion he’s right—he knows a thing or two.—Ever most truly yours,

J. Ruskin.

21 The references to spiritualism and to Turner (see also Letter 6) make the year ascribed seem correct.
Letter 9

[Early 1864]22

. I am very grateful to you for having set me in the sight and hearing of this new world. I don't see why one should be unhappy, about anything, if all this is indeed so. I can't quite get over this spiritual spelling, I always excepted—expected—I mean (that's very funny now: the ghosts are teaching me their ways, it seems)—I expected at least, when I got old, and to the hairy gown time, that at least I should be able to rightly spell. (There again two 'at leasts'; my head is certainly in the next world this morning.) But that story of the grapes pleased me best of all. I believe it on Captain Drayton's23 word—and it is all I want—a pure and absolute miracle, such as that of the loaves. I was always ready to accept miracles—if only I could get clear and straightforward human evidence of it. It was not the New or Old Testament that staggered me, but the (to my mind) absurd and improbable way of relating them. I could believe that Jesus stood on the shore and caused a miraculous draught of fishes, but I could not believe that the disciples thereupon would immediately have begun dining on the broiled fish. I was sorry I went away last night without saying good night to those two stranger gentlemen—but my head was full of things.

22 The date ascribed to this fragment seems satisfactory in view of the evidence to substantiate it in Works, XVIII, xxxi-xxxii, where Cook and Wedderburn discuss Ruskin's interest in spiritualism.

Letter 10

[Mid-April, 1864]

Dear Mrs. Cowper,—I am too much astonished to be able to think, or speak yet—yet observe, this surprise is a normal state with me; and has been so, this many a day. I am not now more surprised at perceiving spiritual presence, than I have been, since I was a youth, at not perceiving it. The wonder lay always to me, not in miracle, but in the want of it; and now it is more the manner and triviality of manifestation than the fact that amazes me. On the whole I am much happier for it, and very anxious for next time; but there is something also profoundly pitiful, it seems to me, in all that we can conceive of spirits who can’t lift a ring without more trouble than Aladdin took to carry his palace, and I suppose you felt that their artistical powers appear decidedly limited. I meant to ask, next time, for the spirit of Paul Veronese, and see whether it, if it comes, can hold a pencil more than an inch long. Thank Mr. Cowper for sending me the bits of paper. Why do you say ‘cold daylight’? I should say ‘snuffy candle-light’ if I were a ghost—I believe—and on the whole decline incense and ask for fresh air. My mind has been for months so entirely numb with pain, and so weary, that I am capable of no violent surprise even from all this, and I go about my usual work as if nothing had happened—but with a pleasant thrill of puzzlement and expectation, breaking into my thoughts every now and then. My Mother’s Mother’s name was Margaret Ruskin, unmarried; I haven’t got at my father’s mother yet. I was sorry not to have asked more questions of that disagreeable Bible-reading spirit. Partly, I was afraid of

24 Both this letter and Letter 11 concern spiritualism and Veronese. It is likely, then, that they were written approximately the same time, and, as internal evidence suggests, Letter 11 was written in the middle of April, 1864.
receiving some answer that would have hurt me, and partly I was dreamy and stupid with wonder—thinking more of the process of tearing the leaf than of enquiring of an oracle, which, besides, I was not altogether clear about its being desirable to do. But if I get Paul Veronese to come, won't I cross-examine him!

Always gratefully,
J. Ruskin.

The tables are very decidedly 'turned' since I wrote to you in a doctorial tone as being able to help you.
Dear Mrs. Cowper

Do you mind my writing to you without black decorations—or negative—illumination—at the border? Because it does not in the minutest degree comfort me for my father's death to dirty my fingers every time I write a note.

I have been laying down turf, where mould was, under a fruit wall, that I may always walk there and look at the blossoms at ease: and I've been paving a bit of gravel walk with new pebbles; and I've been paving a little inch of garden walk of that subterranean garden of ash-trees (I mean that piece of botany for a pun, please—and I think it's original,)—where everything grows upside down, and is fixed instead of watered, with the loveliest little agate-pebble of a good intention of writing to you to say you hadn't hurt me a bit—but (—that pen won't do after all—and this steel one goes through the paper—) quite other than hurt me—and that I would try and not hurt you.

—Well—no—not yet. I'm not able to take nice things—not even to take talks—, (I cannot get a pen—) —yet—so dead I am—I'm afraid of Mrs. Howitt—isn't she a "gushing" person? and yet I know she must be nice—and I should try to be nice too—and be so tired. I don't want to be prophesied to. To

25 In the text of this letter it will be seen that Ruskin speaks of "Currant blossom." A diary entry of April 14, 1864 (Diaries, II, 584), in which he notes "Work at Currant Blossom," suggests the date ascribed.

26 Which occurred on March 21, 1864.

27 The wife of William Howitt (1792-1879), termed a "miscellaneous writer." Both were spiritualists and participated in numerous séances with the celebrated—notorious—D. D. Home. A study of this couple is to be found in C. R. Woodring's Victorian Samplers: William and Mary Howitt (Lawrence, Kansas, 1952).
be prophesied about is delightful—it makes one feel so grand—but to be prophesied to comes always too much into the form of lecture or commission—or direction—or something tiresome or frightening—which is worse: I've got into a course of investigation of Currant blossom, which seems to me about as vast a subject as I am fit for yet, and I like meandering about among the bushes in the afternoons—and I don’t care about the next world if there are no currants—stay—now I shall be hurting you again if I don’t mind—Well—but I do want to have some more evenings—and to bring Simon with me if I may—so candid & good and wise and true he is; and I want to see what the spirits can make of him.—I was bored by their tiresome play about whistling the other night, when I wanted to talk to Paul Veronese. They said they would fetch him the next night you know.—I don’t expect anything very happy from my father—I tell you that, in case anything should come—that you may not think it takes me with evil surprise, if good comes, so much the better. Is there time to arrange one for Saturday? I am going out of town for a week on Monday, and I know Saturday would suit Mr. Simon, better than any other day I mean, in general.

Ever gratefully Yours,
J. Ruskin.

28 John Simon (1816-1904), one of Ruskin’s several physicians. Ruskin first met Simon in 1856 and their friendship developed quickly. Simon, who held a number of important medical posts, including the presidency of the Royal College of Surgeons, was knighted in 1887. He attended Ruskin during the mental collapse of 1878 and played a prominent part in the medical side of Ruskin’s tangled emotional life.
Dear Mrs Cowper,

I got home on Saturday evening, only in time to be sorry I had not come back on Friday—But I would have made an effort to come; only I thought that two cold people like John Simon & me might check the power too much.—I ought to have answered your nice note before now—but I can’t get in from the garden when I go out—in time to do anything—please don’t ask me to come to dinner. I feel stupid & odd and ugly and wretched—among strangers. It’s too late to mend my ways—especially in summer when I like the long quiet evenings—But it is too late anyhow.

I have plenty to do at home—and must stay and do it. I don’t want to talk—I want to rest, and do things.

Why must we all do things when we are “so tired.” I declare I won’t, for one.

Ever gratefully Yours,

J Ruskin

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29 The close connection between this letter and Letter 11—in their references to Simon and spiritualism—suggests strongly the date ascribed.
Dear Mrs Cowper

I am bound, for the Yorkshire hills, to morrow: but will really come whenever you think I can be useful in that business. I was not "worritted" by the blame, last night. But I was by the advice.—What I am—these beings probably know better than I:—but what I should do or believe—? All they say is so precisely what the weak—illiterate Evangelicals say, in this world, and the impression on my mind is beginning to be that they know no more—out of the body—than in it, except that there is a spiritual state. It seems to me they retain their earthly ignorances—wickednesses—weaknesses—at least in great measure. How can they ask me to believe—yet more than I do?—Were I to speak out about this—I could do no good till I know more. But they were right in accusing me of fear—I shall be hard put to it to say—if I have to say—"the old faith is right after all," but assuredly I'll say so—if I find it so—Hitherto—the facts are inconsistent with it—the sayings only consistent. But how marvellous—that fact of the immediate presence of the spirits—from any distance—You know that was very pretty of that spirit I asked for, to give only her pets name—Ellie—I was wrong to ask for the other—that was what she meant by her silence.

But you know there was much to make me sorrowful—besides the scolding I got—only I expected that—and my life

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30 The opening sentence of the letter yields the date suggested, for the reference to the "Yorkshire hills" is associated with the commencement of the lecture entitled "Traffic" which Ruskin gave on April 21, 1864, in the Town Hall, Bradford. "Traffic" begins: "My good Yorkshire friends, you asked me down here among your hills. . . ." Also, April 21, 1864, was a Thursday, and as Ruskin talks of going down "tomorrow" and dates the letter "Wednesday Ev[even]g," it seems the date given is highly likely.
has been so mistaken—and his,\textsuperscript{31} also—that which of us has been wrongest—I don’t believe he can know there, any more than I here. But he ought to speak to me alone—surely—I could not talk to him that way.—How happy you are with your dear ones—you can talk everywhere to them.

Ever gratefully Yours

J Ruskin

\textsuperscript{31} John James Ruskin’s.
Dear Mrs Cowper

I am laid by with cold—and cannot count on any liberty at any fixed date—I was unwilling to write yesterday—it is so tempting—that Panshanger\footnote{Panshanger, the country seat of William Cowper’s family, is about two and a half miles west of Hertford. There is an interesting and reasonably full account of the house—not an especially attractive edifice—in The Victoria History of the County of Hertford, ed. William Page (4 vols.; Westminster, 1902), III, 468-72. Gilbert White speaks admiringly of the “Panshanger oak” in The Natural History of Selborne. The estate is perhaps more renowned for its parks and timber than for its architecture.} ideal, and I want to see you and Mrs Cowper so much—But my looks into that higher world of yours, especially on its womanly side—always leave me sorrowful and discontented with my life—or my semi- or demi-life—which is very foolish, but which is nevertheless always so. It is better for me to keep at my work, and indeed I have enough on my hands just now.

Here is vanity for you, too! I should like to read that lecture to Mrs Cowper. It will take a full hour and a quarter. And allowing for interruption—(such as disreputable essays need)—and for a little flattery—which I can’t get on without—it might take an hour and a half. They miss all my best bits out of those Newspaper reports—do you public men live a life of perpetual mental imputation of this sort? and does every paper miss exactly the bits its party doesn’t like—and which you spoke just because they didn’t?—and which you therefore chiefly do?

I’m going to publish the lecture but it will be with notes & take some time—and it’s better read, being meant for that. I am so glad you like it, but how in the world do you find time to see things?

Ever faithfully Yours

J Ruskin

\footnote{The date is based on the textual reference to “that lecture” which suggests Ruskin is writing about “Traffic” (see preceding letter).}
Letter 15

Denmark Hill, S. [Mid-July, 1864]34

Dear Mrs Cowper

Are you quite sure you are in town?—I have an uneasy feeling that this can be only a spiritual manifestation from Curzon Street. But I'll come at seven on Thursday to see.

Ever faithfully Yours

J Ruskin

34 The date is deduced from the textual references to spiritualism and to Thursday; both suggest a meeting at Mrs. Cowper's on Thursday, July 19, 1864 (Diaries, II, 594) at which D. D. Home, the spiritualist, was present.
Dear Mrs Cowper—

Now how could I tell you if I were alive? when I didn't know if you were anywhere, or somewhere else—You might have been in Rome again, for what I knew—I've a dim notion that you are always there.—I can't tell you anything to day. And tomorrow I've nothing to tell except that I am working hard at Egyptian mythology & such like. But I will write again tomorrow.—I can only send this word today. All kind memory to Mrs Cowper.

Ever faithfully Yours,

J Ruskin

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35 The date derives from the textual reference to Egyptian antiquities, upon which Ruskin worked hard, in the British Museum, in the closing months of 1864 (Works, XVIII, xxxiii-xxxv). Allusions to Egyptian lore are not infrequent in The Ethics of the Dust, which appeared in the following year.

36 Where Ruskin first became aware of Mrs. Cowper in 1840, though he did not meet her until 1854 (Works, XXXV, 503).
Letter 17

26th September [1864]

Dear Mrs Cowper,

I have been trying to find some way of getting down this week—it is so tempting—your promise of quiet—and I should indeed like so much to come—were it possible—But an infinite number of cobweb threads fasten me here—inexplicably—but not to be broken. The strongest being a dim thread indeed—leading I know not where through labyrinths of old times. I’ve just got into some depth of sand about the Egyptian things—and if I leave my work ever so little the sand will all blow in upon me again—My head is full of misshapen Gods, & worse misshapen interpretations of them—but it is all so interesting—and will bear at last on what interests you—But at present it is too much for my poor little brains, and I can’t talk about it, or anything. Then I’ve workmen in the house—in short—I can’t come, or at least it seems to me so which is all the same. Miss B is an inoffensive, quiet kind of girl enough, if you like to ask her by herself—but I’m not sure that she could come—she’s so busy photographing.

I told you—did I not? that we had an evening with Home

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37 The textual reference to "Egyptian things" places this letter close in time to the one immediately preceding—hence the year suggested.

38 Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-86), born near Edinburgh and taken to the United States as a child. Home achieved fame as a spiritualist in America, England, and on the Continent. He attracted many distinguished followers in legal, academic, and literary circles. Browning had Home in mind when he wrote "Mr. Sludge the Medium." Home published autobiographical writings, founded (with S. C. Hall and a Dr. Elliotson) the Spiritual Athenæum, and was the subject of two books from his wife's pen. He was also involved in a seamy chancery suit over the sum of £60,000 he was said to have acquired from a lady by "spiritual" influence. It is likely that the evening Ruskin mentions occurred in June, 1864. For further information about Ruskin's connections with this man see D. D. Home: His Life and Mission (London, 1888), pp. 212 ff.
at the Halls!\textsuperscript{39} and that absolutely nothing happened all night. —But I'll go well into it some day, only I must learn hieroglyphics first, & a few things more.

—Ever with sincere regards to Mr Cowper gratefully Yours

J Ruskin

\textsuperscript{39} Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Carter Hall. Both were much concerned with spiritualism. The husband was an editor, author, art critic, and, it would seem, enthusiast about things in general. He achieved modest literary fame, mainly as an editor. He edited \textit{The Art Journal} from 1839—when it was known as \textit{The Art Union}—until his death fifty years later. Ruskin speaks disparagingly of his editorial abilities in Letter 38; for further criticism of Hall by Ruskin see my edition of \textit{Ruskin's Letters from Venice, 1851-1852} (New Haven, 1955), pp. 174-75.
My Dear Mrs. Cowper

That bit about the Aracoeli is of course irresistible—in spite of shame—and indolence—and much to do—here—and voice like a crow’s—(only weak,) I must come,—but I can only come from Thursday to Saturday.—I will get down in good time on Thursday afternoon,—if it really will be quiet—and not full of terrible icy people from everywhere? But don’t write again—Yes—do—for I’m not sure that these days will really do—and please tell me if any—I have faith enough in Lady Cowper to scratch out this—strangers are to be there—their names—for I think I never entered a country house yet without calling some other visitor some absurd name, and covering myself with confusion & wishing myself under the fender—in the first quarter of an hour.

I remember that pleasant evening at Froude’s well—I’m sure I shall be sorry to go away again—it’s the plunge that’s so dreadful but go away I must—for in this Christmas time

40 The black-edged paper on which the original letter is written suggests the death of Ruskin senior in 1864, and the final lines of the letter communicate Ruskin’s desire to take care of his mother during the first Christmas of her widowhood. Taken in conjunction with the following letter—where Ruskin expresses his intention to “stay till Saturday” — this Christmas-time date seems extremely likely, since Christmas in 1864 fell on a Sunday.

41 This was to have been the name of the third part of Our Fathers Have Told Us; for further information about this undertaking see Works, XXXIII, 191 ff. The Church of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli in Rome had strong personal associations for Ruskin and Mrs. Cowper.

42 The sister-in-law of William Cowper and wife of his older brother, the sixth Earl Cowper.

43 James Anthony Froude (1818-94), the historian, and a close friend of Ruskin. It is of interest, in passing, to recall that Ruskin sympathized more with Froude than with Charles Eliot Norton when the latter two engaged in controversy over Froude’s publications about Carlyle.
my Mother has no one to take care of her—and though she is very indignant at the idea of needing to be taken care of, I am not easy when I am away.

With sincere regards to Mr Cowper

Ever gratefully Yours,

J Ruskin
Dear Mrs Cowper

I am sadly afraid you have not got my Monday’s letter and that you will be taken by surprise by this tomorrow—telling you that I mean to follow it myself, and stay till Saturday if I may. I hope to come by mid-day train, but just let me make my way from the station quietly, for I cannot answer for coming by that train. I may be detained until the afternoon—so don’t make any arrangements about me—I’m still not well—but you know—what could one do, but come—so bid?

Ever gratefully Yours

J Ruskin

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44 For corroboration of this date see Letter 18, n. 40.
I have mounted for you another little drawing—which has its meaning also—namely the uselessness even of simplicity and virtue without order—it will make a pretty little companion to the first—and I always intended to include it with the first, for the somewhat large price I named, if the first was bought; but I would not send it to the bazaar because it was done for me hurriedly by Mr Inchbold, and is unfinished and partly spoiled—it happens very prettily (does it not?) that I am able thus with so much pleasure to myself to fulfil my sense of justice to the Purchaser! This cottage is in Savoy—at St Martin’s—just under the aiguille de Varens—and some day—I will touch the spoiled background for you and make it more intelligible—it is a little waterfall between grey cliffs. There is much habitual misery in these cottages: their people living—with least possible labour—in the midst of luxuriant abundance.

I cannot write more, but hope for some happy talks when you return. I write to Mr Cowper today also—being ever gratefully yours and his,

J Ruskin

I will send the cottage to day to Broadlands. I am very glad to hear of the occasion of your being there. Will you offer my respectful regards to lady Palmerston?

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45 This stray fragment can only be dated—most unsatisfactorily—before the death of Lady Palmerston in September, 1869.

46 J. W. Inchbold (1830-88), a painter whose work—especially “The Moorland,” based on a passage from “Locksley Hall”—Ruskin greatly admired. Ruskin’s kindness to Inchbold, as well as some drawings the artist executed for him, is referred to in E. T. Cook’s Life of Ruskin (2 vols.; London, 1911), I, 401-2.

47 A place much enjoyed by Ruskin and often mentioned in his work. The Hotel de Mont Blanc in St. Martin gives its name to a chapter in Praeterita.
Dear Mrs Cowper,

I'm so glad you want to see me. I'll come whenever you like to tell me, now. I want to see you, and to ask you to be acquainted with two very dear friends of mine who are so nice—both: Mrs La Touche and her daught.—I don't know how to manage these things, but I must and will manage it—There.

Ever affectionately Yours,

J Ruskin.

Please write at least to say if Mr Cowper is better. Sincere regards to him.

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48 This conjectural date is based on the textual reference to the presence of the La Touche family in London at this time; from Diaries, II, 585, we know that it was late this year that Ruskin had seen Rose for the first time in three years. Also, by the time the La Touches returned to Ireland—in the spring of 1866—they had come to know Mrs. Cowper well.
Letter 22

Denmark Hill, s.

8th January [1866]

My dear Mrs Cowper

Mrs La Touche wrote to you, I find yesterday, in consequence of a mistake partly hers, partly mine—she having understood that you were to call upon her, yesterday.

I am sure you will kindly do so when you return to town. I hope this letter may be in time to prevent your surprise at hers.

Faithfully Yours,

J Ruskin

49 The similarity of subject in this letter and Letter 21 suggests the year ascribed.
Dear Mrs Cowper

If you are well enough to allow us, everybody will come on Thursday next: I think you will like Mr La Touche and it is better so—and I think he is pleased that we settled it so—And if you're very very good—you might ask me, the other way, besides, another day, you know, mightn't you? Please write and say if you're better. I don't mean only if we may come. I mean I really do want to know that you're better.

Ever gratefully Yours,

J Ruskin
Dear Mrs Cowper

You see, with the Six-foil arrangement, the “going down” is all very well—but when one is down—it does’nt do; there’s a nasty cross diagonal. I should like mightily to have Dolly and Henry;\(^52\) but then—you see,—you would have to give Rosie to Henry: Don’t have Rossetti, please; If you could have two other nice people (—Mr & Mrs Froude?)—it would do; or if you could get Dolly and any body nice for her, bigger than me; without Henry.—Or Henry alone, and somebody bigger than Rosie for him:—you see, though Mr L.\(^53\) is very good—yet, (not by his fault) his coming will take away the sense of “cosiness,” because—more because he thinks so himself—than for any other reason—but so it is—and so, you can for me: and ten will be better than six that way, and you can have anybody that’s nice. Do you know Professor Owen.\(^54\) He’s nice, and he lets Rosie teaze him out of his life, when she goes to the Brit. Mus. I think perhaps I could manage to bring him, but you must surely know him? I like Capt Drayton too—but we must’nt have more evangelicalism please. I’ll come in tomorrow afternoon, in hope of seeing you, for a

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\(^{51}\) The year and month are based on the indications from Letter 23 that Ruskin is arranging a gathering—including the La Touches and himself—at Mrs. Cowper’s.

\(^{52}\) Most probably Henry Frederick Cowper, one of William Cowper’s nephews. Dolly was the nickname for Lady Florence Cowper, sister of Henry Cowper. In 1871 she married Auberon Edward William Molyneux Herbert.

\(^{53}\) La Touche.

\(^{54}\) Sir Richard Owen (1804-92), one of the most eminent anatomists of his day. In 1856 Owen was placed in charge of the natural history divisions of the British Museum. Because of his numerous writings and diversified interests Owen made many friends among Victorian intellectuals.
minute—and you can give me orders then—and meantime—if you can make sure of lady Florence & Henry, do, and you can think afterwards how to manage for me.

Always gratefully Yours,

J. Ruskin.

You don’t say a word about yourself. You might have believed me. Thanks for the thought of my mother. But alas—she will never—but for a drive—or a little propped walk in the garden go out of her house more. She is lame, & nearly blind, and very old—84.
Dear Mrs Cowper

For the sake of the Aracoeli, bear with me just a little more; it is such a relief to talk to you about things: and I did not tell you all I wanted, this morning. You might think it wrong in me to avail myself at all of the reluctant permission of the father & mother to continue in any shadow of our old ways.—But there is a quiet trust between Rosie and me which cannot be broken, except by her bidding. I know very certainly that she will not engage herself in any way without telling me about it first;—and also, that in my respect for her, (while her mother will always treat her as a mere child) and in my understanding of all her thoughts, and sympathy with them (which her father cannot always give)—my regard is precious to her; and she likes to be able to say anything she has in her mind to me—and would not be at all pleased if she were at present obliged to break off intercourse. And I am simply her servant. When she bids me leave her—I shall do so without a word of farther petition. But only she can bid me. I must not do it of my own purpose or thought. As far as a child who has never felt love, can imagine what it is, she knows so much of it as that I care only for her happiness—and that she has only to do what is right and best, and due to herself—that nothing else than that could ever help or comfort me.

—Now, observe—in any word you speak to the mother—you must remember that she knows perfectly how I feel: but there is no confidence between Rosie and her; and she knows nothing of the child's depth of feeling—and I think could not be brought to understand or at least to believe it—rightly. Rosie's just like Cordelia—so you had better not in any way
speak otherwise of Rosie to her,—it would only make things a little more difficult for me, if she thought more of her daughter—and they cannot at least at present—he brought into any quite true or happy relations. Now with the Father, it is nearly the reverse. Rosie is infinitely precious to him, and there is great and true sympathy between them;—except about me;—for he cannot understand me at all, nor has he any idea of my caring for her otherwise than as a goodnatured and—to him—inconvenient friend.—But he knows that neither Rosie nor I would ever do anything in the least betraying his trust in us: and in now checking our intercourse, I think he is really acting more in fear for me than for her—and dreads, for my sake, that my feelings may become now—what they have been for these seven years.

So now, I think, you know all about it,—and you see you may do what you can for me, freeheartedly—without fear of harm—and for Aracoeli sake. For I cannot be worse—and every day and hour that I gain is just so much pure gain—before the days of darkness.

Ever affectionately Yours,
J Ruskin

—I have been very wicked in forgetting other people, just now. When I saw you before you went to Broadlands, I was so disappointed at your having to go away for a “week,” that I forgot to fulfil a promise I had given to ask you to look over the memorial enclosed and to ask Mr Cowper if it is in right—or endurable form. And if you will do what may be done for us when we send it in. Read all the letter—it is from Mrs Edward Jones and it will show you partly how nice she is.

55 Georgiana Burne-Jones, wife of the painter.