An examination of the correspondence between Ruskin and Sir Arthur Helps, together with references in various of their writings, indicates a personal and literary relationship of uncommon interest and perhaps greater importance than has been generally recognized. We know of the existence of eighteen letters from Ruskin to Helps, three to Helps's oldest daughter, Alice, and eight from Helps to Ruskin.

1 Other than letters, the biographical sources on Helps are severely limited. He once wrote to his friend, W. D. Christie, 14 October 1864 (original in the possession of the writer): "Do not write a biography of me, if you can possibly avoid it. There is nothing to be told; and if there was anything you know how I detest notoriety". As shocked as was the Queen concerning the disclosures of the posthumously published memoirs of Charles Greville, a predecessor in the Council office, Helps wrote: "There will be no papers found after my death, no diaries...I resolved from the first that there should be the instance of a man who saw and heard much that was deeply interesting, but private, and could hold his tongue and restrain his pen forever". In addition to E. A. Helps's introduction to his edition of The Correspondence of Sir Arthur Helps, described in the next note, see his preface to Essays and Aphorisms (London, 1892), Friends in Council (London, 1907), and Life of Columbus (London, 1910). See also H. Preston-Thomas, "Arthur Helps", Blackwood's Magazine, cxxviii (July 1890), 41-53, and The Work and Play of a Government Inspector (London, 1909), pp. 5 ff. For more recent sources see Paul Emden, Behind the Throne (London, 1934), pp. 119-31, and E. A. P. Helps, "Sir Arthur Helps and His Friends" (unpublished manuscript).

2 All known letters written by Ruskin to Helps and his daughter, Alice, and by Helps to Ruskin are printed, in whole or in part, in this article. Several letters have appeared in The Correspondence of Sir Arthur Helps, ed. E. A. Helps (London, 1917). This volume, not now in print, is not in wide circulation and, amongst other editorial imperfections, the dating of the letters is sometimes inaccurate. Three letters from Helps to Ruskin were published in Helen Gill Viljoen, ed. Brantwood Diary of John Ruskin (New Haven, 1971). The textual source of each letter is stated in the footnotes.

Acknowledgement is here made of the gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen to publish materials from the Royal Archives, Windsor Castle. For permission to use published and unpublished materials, acknowledgement is also made to the John Rylands University Library of Manchester; the Directors of the Ruskin Galleries at Bembridge School, Isle of Wight; Harvard University Library; the Pierpont Morgan Library; the National Library of Ireland;
Ruskin's first recorded reference to a meeting with Helps is found in his diary, 27 January 1854, where he wrote: "Yesterday at British Museum and a meeting about Helps['s] sanitary scheme." This entry refers to an unsuccessful effort, in late 1853 and early 1854, to prevent a threatened cholera outbreak in the East End of London. It is, of course, possible that Ruskin and Helps had met earlier, but whatever the date and circumstances of their first meeting and the inception of their correspondence, it was perhaps inevitable that they should come to know one another if only because of shared friendships (Carlyle, Froude and John Hullah, the musicologist) and congeniality of tastes and temperaments together with complementary reforming interests.

Helps is unfamiliar to most readers, and his correspondence with Ruskin is often concerned with a discussion of issues raised by the former's publications; indeed several of Ruskin's letters are written in acknowledgement of gifts of his friend's books. Allusions to Ruskin in his writings indicate Helps's deepening admiration for him. These, in turn, must have affected Ruskin's liking for Helps. Below is presented a brief account of those phases of Helps's public and literary career...
essential to an understanding of the existing correspondence or otherwise pertinent to the Ruskin-Helps relationship.¹

I

Helps was one of those eminent Victorians who combined a literary career with public life. Six years older than Ruskin, he was born in 1813, his father, like Ruskin's, being a London merchant. He attended Eton and graduated, in 1835, from Trinity College, Cambridge. At Cambridge he was elected to the Conversazone Society, sometimes known as the Apostles. These were, according to Theodore Martin, "a few young men, attracted to each other by a common taste for literature and speculation", who held discussions "on social and literary questions". In 1835, the year of Helps's graduation, was published his Thoughts in the Cloister and the Crowd, a volume of essays and aphorisms. Shortly after, he entered public life as secretary to Thomas Spring-Rice (later Lord Monteagle), Chancellor of the Exchequer in Melbourne's government, until 1840, in which year he went to Ireland as private secretary to Lord Morpeth (later Lord Carlisle), Chief Secretary for Ireland. On the fall of the Melbourne government in the following year he returned to his writing, which competed with his public service to the end of his life. He had married Elizabeth Fuller, of Irish parentage, in 1836. He bought, in 1843, Vernon Hill, a large house near Bishop's Waltham in Hampshire. In 1844 appeared The Claims of Labour, expressing concern for the bad living conditions of the working classes as well as the need

¹ Evidence exists, other than in correspondence, that Ruskin possessed several of Helps's books. According to Ruskiana, Works of John Ruskin, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1903-13), xxxiv. 700, Ruskin's bedside shelf at Brantwood contained Helps's books along with a Bible, the works of Shakespeare, Scott, Carlyle and Edgeworth.

According to the Catalogue of Ruskin's library (a copy of which is in the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge School)—one of his own partial catalogues of his books—the following occur: "These titles [according to Mr. Dearden] appear as being in the west study bookcase in 1873": Friends in Council, 1st series 1851; Friends in Council, 2nd series 1859; Companions of [My] Solitude 1852; Essays during Intervals [of] Business 1851; Organisation in D.L. [Daily Life] 1862; Life of Pizarro 1869; Life of Los Casas 1869.
for improvement in the relationship between master and man. Such an emphasis must have appealed to Ruskin.

Helps published in 1847 and in 1849, in two parts, the first series of essays entitled *Friends in Council*. He presented in this work discourses on social, political, and literary topics, each delivered by one of an imaginary coterie of congenial associates, followed by a discussion. Chief among the participants are Milverton, who strongly resembles Helps not only in his estate (Worth-Ashton, which is much like Vernon Hill) but also in his tastes and predilections; the pleasingly sarcastic Ellesmere, a jurist; and Dunsford, the narrator, an ex-college tutor turned parson. These characters, with new colleagues added from time to time, appeared also in several ensuing publications, including works of fiction, so useful did Helps find this method of presenting his ideas. Although he acknowledged his debt to Bacon,¹ these dialogues were based, in addition, not only on the deliberations of the Cambridge Apostles but also on talk among the distinguished guests Helps entertained at Vernon Hill, such as Henry Taylor, Charles Kingsley, Emerson, G. H. Lewes and Ruskin.² Some use of these conversationalists is also made in Helps's *Companions of My Solitude* (1851), a slender volume of rather disjointed essays.

Helps's career as a historian is here significant because of Ruskin's essentially negative reaction to it. Preoccupation with the evils of the institution of slavery and a talent for historical research led him to write *The Conquerors of the New World and Their Bondsmen*, published in two volumes in 1848 and 1852, and *The Spanish Conquest in America and Its Relation to the History of Slavery*, in four volumes, published from 1855 to 1861. Helps's concern for accuracy took him on two journeys to Spain to study original manuscripts. His historical writing,³ recognized on both sides of the Atlantic, brought him the offer

¹ Specifically, "Essay of Discourse".
³ Several individual biographies, beginning with the *Life of Los Casas* (1868), were prepared from the larger histories.
of the Oxford Professorship of Modern History, which he refused.

However, not all his writing during these years was historical. For instance, in a pamphlet, "Some Thoughts for Next Summer", written in late 1853, he sought to prevent the threatened cholera epidemic, and also made his first recorded reference to Ruskin. Moreover, an allusion in the last of three lengthy articles entitled "Friends in Council Abroad" and composed entirely of dialogues, appearing in Fraser's Magazine in December 1855, and January and February 1856, suggests a growing familiarity with Ruskin. Here Milverton, talking about the various manifestations of truth, declares:

The movement that there has been of late years in the arts—in architecture—in decoration—has been towards truth and meaning, and will have a great effect upon what are called the serious affairs of the world. The world may come to be better governed when houses are better built. Such a maxim as that of Pugin's, 'Let the construction be seen,' is full of truth; and when once acted upon, will not be confined to architecture only.

Ellesmere [the cheerful cynic]

Ah, I think we see the influence of your friend, Mr. Ruskin, in that last remark.

Milverton

Well, I am not going to subscribe to everything that Mr. Ruskin has said, but whatever I have read of him has made me think—has made me afterwards look more earnestly and more sincerely at men's work; but I like him personally, because I found him so hearty and so useful on one occasion when I saw him tested. [The sanitary scheme, perhaps.]

These articles were never re-published.

However, "War, an Essay and Conversation", printed in Fraser's Magazine in March 1859, reappeared in the completed Friends in Council, Second Series, later in the year. The fortifications of Namur are the colourful setting for the essay delivered by Milverton, of some importance because it expresses

1 Very helpful in dating this work is a letter from John Simon to D. Craven, an assistant to Helps, in December, 1853, asking the latter to thank Helps "for his kindness in sending me a copy of this paper" ("Thoughts for Next Summer"). The British Museum Catalogue dates the work as "1853?"). On p. 6 of this pamphlet is a reference to Ruskin "lecturing on Domestic Architecture".


3 Pp. 253-79.
Helps's pacifistic view, with which Ruskin was by no means in complete agreement. Force cannot propagate opinion, we are told, and no war ever achieved lasting results. Significantly, money appropriated for military expenses, including the maintenance of large standing armies, raised by taxation on those unable to afford it, could be better used for social reform.

*Friends in Council*, Second Series (1859), a favourite of Ruskin's, capitalizes on the fat and pessimistic Mr. Midhurst and the youthful Mabel and Blanche, who, setting out to captivate the hearts of the middle-aged Milverton and Ellesmere, supply a needed romantic twist. Here the "Friends" are "in a very tired and stupid state of mind". They agree that "change is the arch-consoler", but not on the form which that change should take. Ellesmere advocates a trip abroad, Milverton just a change of pursuit, perhaps a closer look at nature. The trip wins over the nature study in spite of the protests of Leonard Milverton that:

> we shall have so many pictures and works of art to see.... By the way, did I ever tell you that before I went to Venice, I said jokingly (dreading the pictures that I should have to see), that I could only look at six and a half, and that Mr. Ruskin should direct me if he liked? To my astonishment and pleasure I found a letter from Mr. Ruskin at Venice, directing me which six and a half I was to see. I had already, however, been lugged through several galleries. Thenceforward I kept to the six and a half. His choice seemed to me admirable, especially the half picture, which I went three times to see.

**Ellesmere**

> An extraordinary event for you. But what do you mean by half a picture?

**Milverton**

> Oh! One half was not worth looking at, and the other was transcendentally beautiful. Mr. Ruskin kept to his agreement, and did not delude me into seeing the seven pictures instead of six and a half.


3 Ibid. p. 22. In a letter to his brother T. W. Helps from Venice, in the summer of 1857 or 1858 (*Correspondence*, pp. 87-89, dated erroneously as 1850), Helps makes a similar, but not identical, reference: "... before I left London, I said to Mrs. Simon or Alice [Helps's daughter] I wish Ruskin would tell me about the $5\frac{1}{2}$ pictures which it would be desirable for me to see. Well, Ruskin heard of this and wrote to me here, telling me where the said $5\frac{1}{2}$ might be seen. The $\frac{1}{2}$ is the thing I like best; and he is right in choosing it for the $\frac{1}{2}$, as one side of the picture is quite common-place, and the other, to my mind, transcendent. It is a Tintoretto, I will talk to you about it when we meet.
In 1860, at the request of Palmerston, Helps became Clerk of the Privy Council, an office that brought him into a close relationship with the Royal family. Significantly, Prince Albert, shortly before his death in 1861, became interested in Helps’s scheme to establish a pottery industry on property adjacent to Vernon Hill, where a bed of china clay had been discovered. Helps intended to practise here certain of his own ideas as to the proper relationship between management and labour, but the enterprise was a failure. It could not compete with the Staffordshire potteries, and the somewhat too idealistic Helps had put too much faith in the honesty of his managers, who cheated him. His losses were so heavy that he had to give up his estate. The Queen offered him a house at Kew, but his financial burdens weighed heavily on him to the end of his life. Sympathizing with his plight, Ruskin tried to relieve his financial distresses.

After the death of the Prince Consort, Helps became increasingly indispensable to the Queen, whom he served in many unofficial ways. For instance, he assisted her in the selection of the Prince’s speeches and addresses (1862), for which he wrote a preface, and later helped her to prepare parts of her journals to be published as *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands* (1868). Ruskin, too, shared in the editing of this manuscript. The heavy pressure of Court duties, however, did not keep Helps from pursuing his literary career. With the publication of the Utopian romance *Realmah* (1868), praised by Ruskin, he entered the realm of fiction writers. Outwardly concerned with Swiss lake dwellers of the Bronze Age, the book makes thinly-veiled allusions to contemporary England. Realmah, a noble, self-righteous but self-sacrificing youth, becomes king through his stratagems and talents. He is, in due course, wounded, first in war and later in a simulated combat, and dies in early middle age. An implied compliment to the late Prince Albert is perhaps intended, though Realmah

This Ruskin is a man of great genius. One of the 5½ is a picture which I suspect not one person in a thousand ever sees at all. It is very badly placed. It is at the ‘Scuola di San Rocco’.” It has been suggested that this is either the “Adoration” or the “Crucifixion”.
has three wives. One of these, in the style of Queen Victoria, goes into complete seclusion after his death.

The dialogues that frequently interrupt the narrative of *Realmah* contain flattering references to Ruskin. In one, Sir Arthur Godolphin, a new recruit to the "Friends", replies to Milverton's question "Why should we make [life] a vale of tears? Are there no sorrows on the hill-tops?" with the statement: "Ruskin, in his eloquent way, would show you that there is really less sorrow on the hill-tops, and that mountaineers, living in close amity with nature, are better and heartier people than the money-making inhabitants of the valleys".¹ Milverton, elsewhere, to complete Helps's tribute to his friend, includes Ruskin with Froude, Trollope and Carlyle among "men eminent in literature".²

*Realmah* was followed by *Casimir Maremma* (1870), a novel about emigration, an appealing subject to Ruskin as well. The familiar "Friends" are on hand, but they withhold their comments to the end, doubtless to satisfy critics of the earlier romance. In the introduction, Milverton makes a characteristic allusion to Ruskin, in declaring that "Vulgarity,... as Ruskin well says, is a form of death".³ Helps's final novel, *Ivan de Biron; or, the Russian Court in the Middle of the Last Century* (1874), does not allude to Ruskin nor further any particular cause.

1871 brought *Brevia: Short Essays and Aphorisms*, and significantly, *Conversations on War and General Culture*, containing "many .... heretical doctrines"⁴ and dedicated to Ruskin. An "heretical" thesis of the latter book, written at the time of the Franco-Prussian War, is the essential incompatibility between war and culture. In the course of the work, Milverton says some specific things about the "want of culture which allows the existence of the evils which I shall enumerate". These include "deficiency of culture in the construction of those things upon which health and domestic life depend", an assertion with which "my good friend Ruskin" would agree.⁵ And

¹ *Realmah* (Boston, 1869), p. 231. ² Ibid. p. 262.
⁴ Helps to Henry Austin Bruce (Rylands English MS. 1254/128).
⁵ *Conversations on War and General Culture* (London, 1871), p. 172.
again, in proposing that art, science, and literature flourish most in the time of peace, Milverton (Helps), admitting that he has no great knowledge of art, declares: "My impression is strong, very strong, that I am right; but we will ask some one who does know. We will appeal to our friend Ruskin. If he decides against us, I will bow to his decision. But about Literature and Science I am as firm as the Fates." 

On 18 July 1872 Helps received his knighthood. In the same year he published *The Life and Labours of Mr. Brassey*, the railway builder, and *Thoughts upon Government*, and in 1873 appeared *Some Talk of Animals and Their Masters*, prefaced by a "motto" taken from the works of Ruskin. The book was inspired by Helps's current preoccupation with cattle diseases and the transportation of animals, both responsibilities of the Privy Council office. Just before his death on 7 March 1875 appeared *Social Pressure*, an earnest attempt to stress the need for social (as opposed to political) reform, for which "pressure... is strong and continuous from all the sensible people in the realm". However, as usual, the scope of the book is broader than the title might suggest. Indeed, in a conversation on "Vulgarity", Ellesmere asserts that "All vulgarity simply results from want of self-confidence... My idea is not original. I gained it from Ruskin, or from a quotation which Milverton once made from him, in which that most eloquent writer said that 'vulgarity was death', or words to that effect. That saying enlightened me at once. I saw that vulgarity was deficiency and not super-abundance." It is clear that Helps's enthusiasm for Ruskin continued undiminished to the end of his life.

The relatively small number of surviving letters between Ruskin and Helps is partially accounted for by the statement of E. A. Helps, in an introduction to a collection of his father's correspondence, that in various moves from London to Vernon Hill and Kew Gardens many letters were either destroyed or lost. Also, Arthur Helps "had a dread lest correspondence relating

1 Ibid. p. 201.
3 Ibid. pp. 146-50.
to private and confidential matters, or indeed anything which might betray confidence or cause the slightest annoyance to any one, would ever be used, and I have of course respected his wishes, not only in the letter, but in the spirit.”

The existence has been noted of three letters which Ruskin wrote to Alice, the eldest of Helps’s four daughters. She studied art with Ruskin in about the years 1857 or 1858, and he presumably thought well of her, because he extends greetings to her in many letters to her father. Alice, who never married, worked very hard for Helps as his amanuensis, her handwriting often indistinguishable from his. “A plain and quiet girl”; Arthur Munby called her in 1873. Queen Victoria wrote in her Journal that Alice was a “nice, gentle, little person”. Later in life she became a “spiritual daughter” of George Eliot, who was evidently very fond of her.

II

Ruskin expressed his admiration for Helps four years before any surviving correspondence. Even though at the time he wrote Stones of Venice, III, published in 1853, he may not as yet have become personally acquainted, he expresses substantial appreciation of his writings. Specifically, he placed Friends in Council, “a very wise book of our times”, in the distinguished company of works of Plato and Wordsworth, displaying a higher form of playfulness described as “yielding to the impulses of natural delight springing out of health and innocence”, but in Helps “mingled with an exquisitely tender and loving satire”.

Modern Painters, III, published in January, 1856, contains Ruskin's perhaps most enthusiastic praise of Helps, both for thought and style. First of all, he likes him for his plain, practical good sense. He asserts confidently that “A true Thinker who has practical good purpose in his thinking, and is

---

1 Correspondence, pp. vii-viii.
3 Royal Archives, Queen Victoria's Journal, 28 November 1866.
5 Works, xi. 153.
JOHN RUSKIN AND SIR ARTHUR HELPS

sincere, as Plato, or Carlyle, or Helps, becomes in some sort a seer, and must be always of infinite use in his generation."¹

Impatient with German metaphysicians like Kant and Strauss, he declares that "any man who honestly wants philosophy not for show, but for use, and knowing the Proverbs of Solomon, can, by way of commentary afford to buy, in convenient editions, Plato, Bacon, Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Helps, will find that he has got as much as will be sufficient for him and his household during life, and of as good quality as need be".² He likewise states in this work not only that "among writers whom I love" his thoughts have been guided by Wordsworth, Carlyle and Helps, but also that "there are things which I hope are said more clearly and simply than before, owing to the influence on me of the beautiful quiet English of Helps".³

Ruskin early expressed his enthusiasm for Helps by recommending his books. He considered their reading indispensable to the formation of taste in young writers and artists. For instance, he wrote to Ellen Heaton on 13 December 1856, concerning a manuscript that she had sent to him for criticism: "If you read in John Bunyan, and Bacon, and Helps, and then turn back to your own English, you will feel it".⁴ Ruskin, in proposing a programme of literary studies for aspiring young artists in Elements of Drawing (published in June, 1857, but originally delivered as lectures at the Working Men's College), advocates: "Of reflective prose, read chiefly Bacon, Johnson, and Helps".⁵ To ladies he not only recommended but sometimes presented works of Helps. A copy of Friends in Council (2nd edition, 1859) inscribed: "Sarah Corlass/with John Ruskin's affectionate regards/Christmas 1859" is now in the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge School, Isle of Wight.⁶ The

¹ Ibid. v. 333-4.  
² Ibid. pp. 424-5.  
⁴ Works, xv. 226-7.  
⁵ This appears to be a gift, because of the inscription and because of the lack of Ruskin's usual textual annotations. However, inserted in the front of the first volume is the top half of one page of a letter from Ruskin to Miss Corlass (undated) in which he says, "I'm so very glad that you like Friends in Council—
"Birds", young ladies whom he befriended at Winnington Hall School, were asked to copy out extracts of Helps (and Wordsworth).¹ In another letter to them he asked, "Have you got the last series of Friends in Council — . . . ? "²

III

Of Helps's earlier works, none seems to have been less satisfying to Ruskin, and more exasperating, than the histories of the Spanish conquest in America. It is quite possible that he did not read the first of these, *Conquerors of the New World and Their Bondsmen* (1848-52), or gave it only a cursory glance, at the time of its first publication. This likelihood is suggested by an entry in Ruskin's diary, 3 September 1872; he writes that he has just "read chief part of Helps' *Conquerors of the New World*".³ There is no extant letter accompanying a gift of this book to Ruskin, nor is there evidence to indicate that Ruskin had received, or read, the first two volumes of *The Spanish Conquest in America* when they appeared in 1855.

However, the first existing letter from Ruskin to Helps acknowledges the receipt of the third volume, published in 1857⁴:

[1]

Saturday 4th April [1857]

Dear Mr. Helps,

I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you today—but it would be a shame instead of pleasure—if I had not first thanked you for your kind letter, and the book. The book is put close beside me—in the Reading shelf of bookcase—and I look at it every now and them; just as one would look at an obstinate friend whom one could not part with, and who was determined to go somewhere I can't read the little books right now—but keep them safe—D.V. I shall be quit of heavy or troublesome work in about three mo[n]ths now, finishing the task of eighteen years—[*Modern Painters*]". Perhaps, on the return of his own copies Ruskin had decided to present his friend with her own, in view of her apparent appreciation of the Helps work.

² Ibid. p. 239. Letter written from Denmark Hill, 18 March 1860.
³ Diaries, ii. 731.
⁴ Correspondence, pp. 56-57, incorrectly dated. The original is Ryl. Eng. MS. 1254/116. The watermark is 1856.
& where we didn’t want to go. And every time I look at it, I feel inclined to speak disrespectfully of Columbus. What business was America of his, I wonder? Why couldn’t he have set up a respectable and trading passenger carrying company—Messrs. Columbus & Co, at Cogoleto,1 and made something of the navigation of the Mediterranean, and kept Pisa a little alive, and Venice—and Alexandria: —that would have been really useful—But America!—I can’t think what America was ever made for—unless to balance that side of the world—
that it might spin properly upon its axis—and it would have spun well enough with nothing in it but its old rattlesnakes & savages, if we hadn’t been fools enough to discover it,—great public nuisance that it is. It spoils our language, and pirates our books—and teaches our merchants dishonesty—and sends over unwholesome tongue to spoil our teeth with. (I’ve got the toothache to-day—and lay awake all last night with it),—and gives people the yellow fever—and great—clumsy—muddy notions about landscape painting—and makes slavery look so ugly, with those arrangements of round hats and long whips, that I’ve no hope of ever getting any slavery introduced in England, and I want to particularly—: and now—it is beginning to buy Turners and carrying them over there into the swamps—and here it is—carrying away your head—and your heart—and your time—and dragging me after you—and Sir Charles Lyell says it’s all coming up higher too—out of the sea—an inch in a hundred years—or something—I wish it were going down—instead—an inch a day, until the Atlantic poured into Cotopaxi—and put an end to that nasty American habit of smoking, at the centre of it—

Meantime—I’m much obliged—of course—for the book—just as my dog Wisie is obliged to me when I pat him,—thinking it a great honour, & very kind of me to pat him—but hating to be patted—Good-bye, till dinner time.

Yours, dear Mr. Helps, however,

really very gratefully

J Ruskin

Ruskin had evidently not summoned the courage nor found the time to read the book. Indeed, if he had given it at least a cursory glance, he would have realized that it concerns not Columbus but Pizarro and Cortes. Although he has been suffering from the toothache, Ruskin writes with great exuberance and good humour. The tone suggests a relatively young man (aged 38) seeking to flatter and gain the attention of a more firmly established public figure.

The diary of his father, John James Ruskin, states that on the night before, “3 April John spoke at St Martins Schools [this was Ruskin’s lecture on the Value of Drawing at St. Martin’s School of Art].2 4th Dined at Hullahs with Helps.”3

1 E. A. Helps notes (Correspondence, p. 56), “Columbus was born at Genoa—not at Cogoleto”.
2 Works, xvi. 437-8.
3 In the collection at Bembridge School, Isle of Wight.
Ruskin acknowledged the receipt of the fourth volume in the following letter written in early 1861:

[January, 1861]

Dear Mr Helps

Sincere thanks for sending me this book. It is quite true that among many and deep regrets that trouble me just now—your having spent so much strength & time in unwrapping a mummy, is one of quite my sorrowfullest. Here and there a piece of bitumen turns up—which one burns in a lamp and it makes a nice smell; here and there a grain of wheat—which would bear a hundredfold—if anybody cared to plant it—which they won’t. On the whole—all I can say is fervently thank God it’s done. And you may judge of my true respect for your intellect and affection for you—by the fervency of these thanks—if those at the beginning of the letter seem doubtful to you—

Ever gratefully yours

J. Ruskin

Remember me to Alice

Ruskin’s coolness, expressed in this and the preceding letter, could be traced to several causes additional to the work’s literary shortcomings and the exhaustive labours required of its author. In the first place, Ruskin was not as strongly opposed to slavery as was Helps. Some years later (20 December 1865) he wrote to the Daily Telegraph that while he neither approved of Negro slavery nor its long continuation, he believed that “white emancipation [with so much economic and social injustice prevailing in England] not only ought to precede, but must by the law of all fate precede, black emancipation”. Indeed, Ruskin’s anti-Northern bias during the American Civil War interrupted his correspondence with Charles Eliot Norton and must have strained other American friendships.

In an address, “The Pleasures of Truth”, delivered in 1884, Ruskin suggests another reason for his not very great enthusiasm for Helps the historian: his inability to understand Catholicism. Here he declared that Scott is the “best writer of history we have. Our only historians (ordinarily so called) are Carlyle, Froude, and Helps, but none of them can see all

---

1 Correspondence, pp. 177-8, incorrectly dated. The original is Ryl. Eng. MS. 1254/118. The watermark is 1860. Volume 4 was published in early 1861.

2 Works, xviii. 551.

around a thing as Scott does. Froude does not even know whether he is a Catholic or a Protestant; Carlyle is first the one and then the other, while Helps is deficient because he never understands Catholicism at all".\textsuperscript{1} And that Helps's own interest in writing history soon waned is indicated by his statement, upon refusing the Oxford Professorship, that he knew "one subject poetry well; but I do not know enough of history generally, to make me fit for the professorship. . . . Besides, to tell the truth, I am rather tired of historical research, and, indeed of literature altogether, & should be glad of other employment".\textsuperscript{2} Also, in a letter to Mrs. John Simon accompanying a gift copy of the third volume of \textit{The Spanish Conquest}, he wrote: "I agree with him [John Simon] & Mr Ruskin that there are more important things than the writing of history."\textsuperscript{3}

The next letter [3] cannot be dated exactly, but it bears the watermark 1857.\textsuperscript{4} It is probable that it was written by Ruskin after Helps's return from a continental tour in the late summer or early autumn of 1858. Helps had sent his friend for identification a piece of stone that he had picked up in the Roman theatre at Verona. Ruskin concludes in his letter that "It is limestone . . . [However,] I know about the materials of all the other buildings in Verona—except the amphitheatre—My doubt is if it be of Veronese limestone; or tufo: and that I presume is exactly the point you want to have settled."

This letter of Ruskin is of considerable interest because of what it has to say about Helps's daughter: "How hard Alice is working—and how well she is getting on!—I've never seen any young lady work so hard yet." During 1857 and 1858 Alice was studying art with Ruskin, a connection that undoubtedly did much to strengthen his friendship with her father. On 17 January 1858 George Eliot wrote to Sara Sophia Hennell that "Mr. Lewes has been enjoying a week's holiday

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Works}, xxxiii. 506.
\textsuperscript{2} Helps to W. Cowper, 15 March 1860. Copy of original in possession of Mr. E. A. P. Helps.
\textsuperscript{3} Helps to Mrs. John Simon, 3 March 1857. Original in possession of the writer.
at Vernon Hill, and was very pleased to find Alice Helps, a girl of seventeen, become an enthusiastic student of painting under Ruskin, and stoutly battling against the falsity that paints what the painter does not see.\(^1\) On 21 June of the same year Ruskin wrote to his assistant, William Ward, from Switzerland, concerning the work that Alice was to do during his absence.\(^2\)

In spite of the fact that the seven separate dialogues "Friends in Council Abroad" appearing in three instalments in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1855 and 1856 contain, as we have seen, a flattering reference to Ruskin, there is reason to believe that he did not know of them when they were first published. This is indicated in a letter he wrote to the schoolgirls at Winnington Hall, 15 October 1860: "I never saw those dialogues in Fraser—Will you please tell me—(or, I daresay I can find them out by a letter to editor or to Helps) when they began, for I must get them."\(^3\)

Ruskin acknowledged receipt of "War, an Essay and Conversation by Friends in Council", as published in *Fraser's Magazine* in March, 1859\(^4\):

> My dear Helps
> Sincere thanks for your letter—and for your enclosure—and for what you say in it—and for what I hope is the introduction to—a Milverton and Ellesmere journey—is it?—please tell me?
> I am so curious.
> —I think I must say something about War—indeed I feel all you say about "taxation"—but I feel also that taxation is only the means we take of purchasing our luxuries by oppressing the poor.
> —Let every man in England go this year—from now to Christmas—without the following articles—
> 1 Carriage or Horse—(I'm fond of driving in a postchaise myself—like somebody else—when I want to think—Very fond.) Unless the carriage be needed for an invalid—or the horse for exercise—I mean let them go without show or sporting horses—& plate
> 2 Jewellery— Selling what they have—except family jewels—
> 3 Unnecessary or poisonous eatables & drinkables such as turtle—champagne—(I'm very fond of it)—ices, —&c —&c—


\(^3\) Winnington Letters, p. 271.

\(^4\) Correspondence, pp. 217-18. The original is Ryl. Eng. MS. 1254/117.
—And let all women wear one dress—simple—for morning—and one—simple—or many as are necessary for working—of plain white muslin—up to the throat—for evening—dress—till Christmas.

And devote the sums so saved to diminution of taxation—and see what the result would be on Christmas morning.

—Yours always affectionately,
J. Ruskin

The Fraser article wants the opposite side.

All greatness in states has hitherto depended on their being warlike—or at War. —Think of the Bull of Uri—and the Grasshopper—and the Lion

Thermopolyae—
Salamis—
Agincourt—
Naseby—
Waterloo—

The first surviving letter from Helps to Ruskin, dated 8 May 1858, could be in reply to the above, or to another Ruskin letter not now extant:

Vernon Hill
May 8 [18]59

My dear Ruskin,

I duly received your letter, but scarcely knew what to say about the extracts you sent me. They are nobly and beautifully expressed, as it seems to me everything is that you write. But I have studied somewhat the results of war, and I am horrified at them. Of course a 'noble' war may be a fine thing for a nation; but, my dear fellow, there are not many noble wars; and even when they begin from a good cause, they soon degenerate into ignobility. Still, I am willing to hear with all tolerance anything that can be said on the other side, especially when it is said by you.

As to my work, it is a few essays & conversations—not of much credit, & which it is hardly worth while to publish now. I send you a fragment, which, however, you must, if you please, return to me not later than by Tuesday’s post. You will understand the meaning of Ellesmere’s essay.

I am afraid there is no chance of my seeing you before you leave. When do you propose to return?

Most cordially yours
AH

Alice desires to be kindly remembered to you.

The enclosed ‘fragment’ of Helps’s ‘work’ is perhaps another portion, probably in proof, of the shortly-to-be—

published new series of *Friends in Council*. "Ellesmere's essay" is either the deliberately "nauseous" discourse by the cynical Ellesmere on the "Arts of Self-advancement" or "Ellesmere's Plan for a New Essay", either of which Helps would have had good reason for wanting Ruskin to see.

At the very end of the letter, Helps referred to Ruskin's imminent departure from England. Indeed, from 20 May until some time in October 1859, Ruskin was travelling abroad. During this period the new *Friends in Council* was published. Helps had sent copies to his friends, Ruskin perhaps finding his own on returning to Denmark Hill.

Several weeks later, Ruskin wrote expressing his favourable reactions to the book:

My dear Helps—

I have read the new "Friends" with very great delight. I like it even better than the first one—it contains more pretty play, travelling incident—& womanhood—the last being a great gain.

I think you have entirely obtained what you say should be an object of great desire—consolatoriness. It is the most comforting, soothing, softening book I ever read, and has come to me myself—at a fortunate time for me: I having got largely despondent and weary lately—partly the consequence of having to look—perforce at so much bad art in Germany, and partly of "worry" concerning Italian war—and—liberty—and absurdity—and hundreds of vexatious minor things—Railroad bridge over fall of Schaffhausen for example

*Cosi*—with tunnel under chateau of Laufen—Now the "Laufen Hotel".

Not to speak of Geneva being made a railroad station for all the world—and the lakes all stirred and paddled about by steamers till there's no clear water in them and no clear air above them any more than over the Thames.

2 Ibid. pp. 5-14.
3 For example, Lord Stanley acknowledged receipt of a copy on 2 August 1859 (*Correspondence*, pp. 228-9). A similar letter was written on the same date by J. R. Chorley. *Friends in Council*, Second Series, was reviewed in *Fraser's Magazine*, September 1859, pp. 344-60.
4 Original in the possession of the writer. The letter contains a sketch by Ruskin of the railroad bridge and the hotel.
Don't you think this might have been a climax to Mr Midhurst's essay—
And nobody could have found any Consolation.
I want to hear what Alice is about.
And I want to see you—both—but don’t know how—
Ever affectionately yours—
J Ruskin.

This letter is important not only because of what it reveals concerning Ruskin’s state of mind at a particularly crucial period, but also for what it tells us about his apparent dependence on Helps. On 5 December, according to his father’s diary, Ruskin had entertained Lord and Lady Ashburton at lunch. That Helps was on Ruskin’s mind on this same day is further confirmed by a letter he sent to James Russell Lowell. Here, complaining of his “present state of mystification” regarding the completion of *Modern Painters*, he writes: “I like other peoples writing so much better than my own—Tennysons—Carlyles—yours—Helps’s—& one or two others’es!—that I feel much driven to silence and quiet—”.

However, Ruskin’s despondency seems particularly to disturb him in his letter to Helps. Approaching the middle of his life, he was now feeling poignantly an accumulation of burdens and sorrows. During the summer he had, with his parents, been on “what was to be the last and least happy of their many happy journeys together on the continent”. During this journey he had made his first extensive visit to Germany, with whose art, especially the modern, as this letter suggests, he was now more than ever unsympathetic. In the course of his sojourn there he had become increasingly disconcerted by developments in the Franco-Sardinian war against Austria, leading to the Peace of Villafranca. From Germany he had

---

1 Original in Houghton Library, Harvard University.
3 Some of the sentiments in this letter are also expressed in a letter from Ruskin to John Hullah, Munich, 14 July [1859]: “I have been so disgusted by all things lately that I cannot write to any one—ask Mr Simon what has been the matter with me—he knows—and I need not trouble you with grumblings I have had in the midst of much shame and sorrow at the conduct & thoughts of England in this Italian war, to do the most hateful work in my business I ever waded through—namely the examination of modern German art at Munich, &c. Is it possible that these people can write music? ” (Pierpont Morgan MA 2045, no. 1).
gone to Switzerland, where he settled down and attempted to write in his favourite haunts, still disheartened by the railroad bridges, lake steamers, and other outward signs of industrial progress he had just witnessed. Except for a brief stay at Winnington Hall School he had spent most of his time, on his return to Britain, at Denmark Hill, his family home. Although, as always, he deeply loved his parents, his relations with them were now particularly strained. His father, evidently not very favourably disposed to his son's becoming a social critic, prodded him to complete Modern Painters, when he would have preferred to work on Unto This Last.1

Ruskin had found that reading Friends in Council offered respite from his sorrows. His reaction to Mr. Midhurst's doleful essay on the miseries of human life, delivered at the old Roman theatre at Trèves, perhaps in therapeutic contrast to Ruskin's own despondency, seems particularly striking.2

2 Friends in Council, Second Series, ii. 15-38.

The second part of this article will be published in the following number of the Bulletin.