

# JOHN RUSKIN AND ILLUMINATED ADDRESSES

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John Ruskin attracted congratulatory addresses as a honey-pot attracts bees. All manner of organisations bombarded him with laudatory epistles at the slightest provocation.

One of the first examples is now to be found in the Manchester Central Reference Library<sup>1</sup>. It is only a rough draft and it is not clear whether or not the final address was ever sent.

The Ruskin Society of Manchester was first proposed at a meeting held in that city on 17 December 1878. Subsequent meetings took place and the Society was formally established at a meeting held in the Old Town Hall on 13 June 1879. Ruskin's sixtieth birthday occurred in the period between the inception and the establishment—8 February 1879—and an officer of the embryo society drafted the following address of congratulation. There is no mention in the first annual report of the society, dated May 1880, of the society having sent an Address, and in fact the project may have never gone beyond the "draft" stage.

The Ruskin Society recognises with peculiar satisfaction the circumstance that its own origin dating so nearly to the recurring season which gave to England one of her truest and kindest sons, whose writings and labours have suggested its existence and are the principal objects proposed for its study and emulation. It derives from this fact an added pleasure in offering for acceptance by the Author of *Modern Painters* and *Fors Clavigera* and the Founder of St George's Guild the warmest congratulations of its members upon the entirely happy advent of his Sixtieth Birthday. The Society is unwilling to find in this event an evidence of the *old age* which he declares to have already overtaken him, and hopes rather for a gradual and certain restoration of health and strength—though not of youth—as a consequence of his prolonged wise retirement and recreation<sup>2</sup>.

If the history of the Society should record that helpful testimony to the wisdom justice and benevolence of Mr. Ruskin's teachings and

<sup>1</sup> Manchester Central Reference Library, Archives BR 824.86 GR1. I am indebted to Mr. Stuart Evans for drawing it to my attention.

<sup>2</sup> Ruskin had been seriously ill in the Spring of 1878 and his recovery had been slow.

labours was borne at a seasonable hour in the face of great misconception and much culpable ignorance and resistance, that record will be an evidence that a large part of its contemplated work had been achieved. But recognising also that the Art Critic and Pol[itical] Econ[omist] disdains defence of himself simply from any source, saying truly; "it is Xenophon and Solomon, not himself, whose learning is in question";—the Society finds the justification of its existence and objects not alone in present needs and aspirations but in the authority of the great names under which are comprehended in so many vital aspects his unique declarations today respecting the nature of art and the function of Economy, expressed for the reader in words of highest and deepest import, alike vocal with music and refulgent with colour<sup>3</sup>.

Four years later, in 1883, Ruskin was one of the candidates for the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University. He was defeated by John Bright who polled 1,127 votes to his 813. The Address which he subsequently received is now in the Coniston Museum.

In January 1885 Ruskin established a May Day Festival at Cork High School for Girls. The Headmistress was Miss Martin, whom Ruskin had first known at Whitelands Training College, where he had instituted a similar Festival. In the case of the Cork Festival, the Queen was to be known as the Rose Queen, in honour of the Irish Rose La Touche whom Ruskin had loved. Ruskin annually presented to the Queen a specially-made gold cross and one of his books. He also gave the Queens further copies of his books for them to present to their attendants. And annually, after the ceremony, the Queen seems to have sent an Address of Thanks to Ruskin.

The 1885 Address<sup>4</sup> is on two sheets of 15" × 12½" white card fastened together with pink ribbon. The message on the first page reads :

We the Pupils & Teachers of the High School, Cork, S. Ireland,  
 Beg to tender our hearty and loving thanks to our good and kind  
 Friend, Professor Ruskin, for all the pleasure of May-Day 1885.  
 [Signed] Lottie R. Rose Queen.

<sup>3</sup> The draft is endorsed on the reverse "Congratulatory Address/to Mr. Ruskin/ on his Sixtieth b'day/8 Feby 79".

<sup>4</sup> The Cork Addresses for 1885, 1887 and 1895 are in the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge School, Isle of Wight (Bem. MS. 94).

The 1887 Address, decorated with rose sprays by Sarah Robertson, sent "Our Warmest love to The Dear 'Master' Professor Ruskin for a Joyous May Day 1887". This was signed by the Rose Queen, Harriett Alice, and her six "Queen's Maidens", while on page two the signatures were arranged in the form of a compass. Unfortunately the lettering of the 1887 Address was executed in bronze ink of doubtful quality and this has now degenerated into an unpleasant greeny-brown.

In 1895 Blanche, "Regina Rosa", sent "affectionate greeting and grateful thanks" to "Our Dear and Valued Friend Professor Ruskin" on a card, again copiously decorated with roses.

The Spring and Summer of 1885 was another period of ill health for Ruskin and it left him in a very depressed state. This feeling of despondency was evident in the letters which he wrote that September and October to Oliver Lodge. As a means of helping him out of his depression, Lodge arranged "a memorial signed by his admirers throughout England"<sup>5</sup>.

The text of the *Memorial* was drafted in consultation with several of Lodge's friends and colleagues at University College, Liverpool. Over a thousand friends and admirers put their names to it.

The Address and the names of the subscribers were printed and it was sent to Brantwood in time to reach Ruskin on Christmas Day 1885. The Address was sent anonymously and thus it could not be acknowledged. However, so many of the signatories wished to know if the Address had been presented and what its effect was, that eventually Lodge wrote to Joan Severn, Ruskin's cousin, asking her privately about it.

The memorial most assuredly *came!* and was on *Christmas Day* given by me to Mr Ruskin ... If I had had the least idea *from whom* the precious parcel came, I would at once have written to acknowledge it ...

A circular subsequently sent to some subscribers in April 1886 explains that "a preliminary incomplete [Address was sent] on Christmas Day; the bound one recently". The final presentation copy was printed on handmade paper and bound in full green morocco gilt. It is now at Bembidge. A limited number of copies was also run off on ordinary paper for private

<sup>5</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge, "Mr Ruskin and his life work", *St. George*, ix, 4 January 1906.

circulation among subscribers. These were available from Mr. Adam Holden, bookseller, of Church Street, Liverpool, at modest prices, in paper, boards or buckram.

Another Illuminated Address—or rather letter of thanks—may date from about this time. The Ruskin Galleries' collection<sup>6</sup> includes this letter, written on a sheet of card and decorated with a branch of blossom. The letter was sent by Nottingham High School and the subscribers wrote :

We all thank you for taking so much interest in us, as to lend us such pretty paintings and engravings ... all of which now beautify our staircase ... I like your books very much, what I understand of them, and especially your "Sesame & Lilies".

At this period Ruskin was in correspondence with a drawing master named Frederick Harris and in 1886<sup>7</sup> he had told him "I should greatly like to set up a central school for my own pupils in Nottingham, with you for headmaster ..." Perhaps there was ultimately a connection between Mr. Harris and Ruskin's loans to the Nottingham High School.

Ruskin's seventieth birthday on 8 February 1889 was marked by a "Birthday Address to Mr Ruskin". The copy at Bembridge is printed in two colours on eight pages of handmade paper. The message reads :

We, the Undersigned, offer our heart-felt congratulations to Mr Ruskin on his Seventieth Birthday, and fervently hope that he may be spared for many years, to instruct, delight, and guide the ever-increasing number of his Disciples.

The Address was signed by two hundred and eight subscribers, listed under St. George's Guild, Carlyle Society, Glasgow Ruskin Society, Liverpool Ruskin Society, Members and Associates of the Ruskin Reading Guild, and "Unattached".

The 1889 birthday wish, that Ruskin may be "spared for many years to instruct, delight and guide" his followers, was partly in vain. Six months later he finally succumbed to ill-health and spent the remainder of his life in retirement at Brantwood.

The Birthday Address of 1889 was merely the forerunner of

<sup>6</sup> Bem. MS. 94.

<sup>7</sup> *Library Edition of the Works of John Ruskin* (1903-12, 39 vols.), XXXVII, 664.

the celebrations which occurred ten years later on his eightieth birthday. On 8 February 1899 at least seven Addresses were sent to or delivered at Brantwood.

According to the *Westmorland Gazette*, Oxford University sent "a handsomely illuminated address" which was signed by the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Colleges. "The Ruskin Rose Queens of the Cork High School on behalf of their maidens and subjects send their most affectionate greetings and congratulations to their dear Friend ..." began another address. Other addresses came from the Ruskin Linen Industry, Whitelands Training College, and the Coniston Parish Council.<sup>8</sup>

The Ruskin Society of London had their address printed in black, red and gold on a sheet of imitation vellum. Presumably sufficient copies were printed for all thirty subscribers to have a copy, in addition to Ruskin himself<sup>9</sup>.

But undoubtedly the *pièce de résistance* was the National Address promoted by the other Ruskin Societies and organisations associated with Ruskin. Elsewhere I have written that "J.H. Whitehouse [the secretary of the Birmingham Ruskin Society] was undoubtedly the prime mover behind the preparation of the Address"<sup>10</sup>. However, subsequent research has shown me to be wrong. A search of the Minute Book of the Ruskin Society of Birmingham<sup>11</sup> shows that at their meeting on 20 January 1899:

A number of communications were presented from the Glasgow Ruskin Society, and Mr. William White, the Curator of the Sheffield Museum, inviting the society to join with the Ruskin Societies of Glasgow and Liverpool and the Guild of St George, in presenting a national address of congratulation to Mr. Ruskin on the 8th February next, when he would attain his 80th birthday. Resolved, To accept the invitation to join the proposed movement<sup>12</sup>.

Considering that the Address was to be presented nineteen days later, this seems to have been a last-minute decision. More

<sup>8</sup> These Addresses are now in the Ruskin Museum, Coniston.

<sup>9</sup> There are copies at Coniston and Bembridge.

<sup>10</sup> In "The Ruskin Galleries at Bembridge School, Isle of Wight", *Bulletin*, li (1968-69), p. 311.

<sup>11</sup> Now at Bembridge.

<sup>12</sup> The society's accounts, which accompany the Annual Report, April 1900, show that the Birmingham society's "Proportion of expense of National Address to Mr. Ruskin on his 80th birthday" was £19 10s 0d.

of the origins of the Address are to be found in a report in the *Glasgow Evening News* of Thursday 9 February 1899 in a report headed

#### Mr Ruskin's Birthday. Congratulatory Messages

Born on February 8th 1819 Mr John Ruskin yesterday entered his 80th year and the occasion has been the signal for a chorus of congratulations to the Seer of Brantwood ... First and foremost, of course, was that from the Ruskin societies of the country, and it is pleasing to note that the proposal to mark the occasion in this fashion had its origin in Glasgow.

At the beginning of the present session of the Ruskin Society of Glasgow—now, by the way, in its 20th session—it was announced that the honorary secretary (Mr. William Sinclair) had suggested that the 80th anniversary of the birthday of the master of the society would be a fitting opportunity for presenting a united address from all of the Ruskin societies in the country ... The proposal was laid before the councils of the various societies interested, and was enthusiastically taken up, resulting in yesterday's interesting ceremony at Brantwood, Mr. Ruskin's residence in the lake district, the honorary secretaries of the societies of Birmingham and Liverpool handing it over.

The address was on vellum, in album form, and was executed by Mr. Pilley, the illuminator, who prepared the Royal address in 1897. The designs were chosen and the work carried out under instructions from Mr. William White, curator, Ruskin Museum, Sheffield, who was specially requested and willingly consented to act for the Ruskin societies. The vellum case in which the address was enclosed was the gift of Mr. Cobden Sanderson of London, who is an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Ruskin.

The organisations subscribing to the National Address were The St George's Guild; Societies of the Rose, The Ruskin Society of Glasgow; The Ruskin Society of Liverpool; The Ruskin Society of Birmingham; The Ruskin Society of Paisley; Trustees of the National Gallery, and the British Museum, and Representatives of other Institutions; Collaborateurs, Biographers, and Editors (not elsewhere included); The Royal Academy of Arts; The Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours; The Royal Society of Literature; The Royal Institute of British Architects; The Dürer Society; The Art for Schools Association; The Manchester Art Museum, Ancoats; The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; The Geological Society of London; The Mineralogical Society; The Stewartry of Kirkcudbright Museum Association; The Selborne Society; The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest, or Natural Beauty; The National Society for Checking the

Abuses of Public Advertising; The Ruskin Linen Industry, Keswick; The Keswick Schools of Industrial Arts; Whitelands Training College, Chelsea; Whitelands May Queens.

There is no doubt that the tight production schedule set an impossible task for the scribe, Albert Pilley, and how the problem was overcome will emerge later in this article. Pilley is a shadowy figure about whom little appears to be known. He first appears in Sheffield directories as a "clerk" of 97 Leadmill Road, in 1864. By 1870 he seems to have been in partnership with Joseph Hepworth, as Hepworth, Pilley & Co., cutlery manufacturers. By 1884 references to the partnership stop, and by 1889-91 Pilley is shown as a manufacturer of pen, pocket and table knives and razors. By the end of the decade he had either changed his profession or retired to take up a profitable hobby, for between 1898 and 1902 he appears in directories as an "Illuminating artist" of 176 Broad Lane<sup>13</sup>.

Pilley illuminated the Address on the opening of the Town Hall, Sheffield, in 1897, and we know from the obituary notice<sup>14</sup> of his daughter, Genevieve, that, with her help, he produced the address presented to Queen Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee and to the Prince and Princess of Wales.

Genevieve herself was connected with the Ruskin Museum, Sheffield, for over fifty years, first as librarian and assistant curator, and from 1931 to 1949 as curator. She was also a talented illuminator, producing many addresses. She passed the family secret of how to paint gold on vellum so that it would not peel off, to her great nephew, Philip Malone. He was born in Sheffield in 1917 and entered Buckfast Abbey in 1934. He left Buckfast in 1947 and became a signwriter in Pimlico. He was known as an exceptionally good calligrapher.

The 1899 National Address to Ruskin is a masterpiece of Victorian illumination and decoration. It comprised thirteen sheets of vellum, folded to give 52 pages measuring 12" x 10".<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> I am indebted to Dr. E. D. Mackerness for tracing Pilley's name through the various Sheffield directories for me.

<sup>14</sup> *Sheffield Telegraph*, 4 June 1958.

<sup>15</sup> As it now stands, the manuscript only comprises twelve sheets. The centre sheet of four pages was removed by the Severns and given to the Ruskin Museum, Coniston. The two used pages on this sheet contain the Royal Academy of Arts and the Royal Institute of British Architects. The remaining bulk of the manuscript comprised Lot 114 at Sotheby's on 18 May 1931,

The pages are written on one side only, the final four being blank. The lettering and decoration are executed in burnished and brushed gold, black, red, pink, blue, purple, green and grisaille. The whole is a riot of decoration and colour and Pilley's craftsmanship was matched by the ingenuity of the designer, William White.

No haphazard decoration, this. It was all carefully planned by someone who knew his subject thoroughly. Page 1 contains the Ruskin family coat of arms. The Congratulatory Message—"Dear Master and Friend, The Eightieth Anniversary of your Birthday gives us the opportunity of offering our united loving Greetings and heartiest Congratulations ..."—continues for four pages. The decoration on these pages includes the arms again, encircled by Ruskin's motto, *Today, Today, Today*, the Fra Angelico angel with a trumpet mentioned in *Modern Painters* II, Donatello's St George, Carpaccio's St George and the Dragon, a Dürer knight, the lion of St Mark, an angel with a banner saying "Whatever things are lovely ...", and the 11th century cruciform "Sit crux vera" inscription which Ruskin discovered at S. Giacomo di Rialto in Venice.

The first page of signatories lists the Companions of the Guild of St. George, and the Staff of Artists working for the Guild. The borders of this and fifteen succeeding pages contain, on ribbon decoration, the titles and dates of ninety-two of Ruskin's books and articles. The border decoration of the centre four pages varies, and lists the names of sixty-two artists, from Pisano (1205-1278) to Burne-Jones (1833-1898), and twenty-eight authors, from Homer to Patmore (1823-1898). Additional decoration is worked into the final page, where the Q of Queen's contains a miniature copy of Carpaccio's *Dream of St. Ursula*. This is balanced in the lower left corner by a roundel containing three dancing figures from Botticelli's *Prima Vera*. Below the final border is the colophon :

This volume was Designed and Illuminated by Albert Pilley, 176 Broad Lane, Sheffield.

The Address was bound personally by Cobden-Sanderson at the Doves Bindery. He had been much influenced by the teaching

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when it was knocked down for £36 to J.H. Whitehouse. It now forms Bem. MS. 81.



of both Ruskin and Morris, and in 1884 he gave up his career as a lawyer to become a bookbinder. He practiced his art until 1893 when he established the Doves Bindery and at that time he gave up binding himself in order to run the Bindery. But, as a special mark of respect and admiration, he took to his new trade again to bind the Address to Ruskin. Cobden-Sanderson's name appears in the Address under "Collaborateurs"<sup>16</sup>. In 1900, with Emery Walker, Cobden-Sanderson founded the Doves Press where in 1907 they printed Ruskin's *Unto this Last*.

The Address is bound in limp vellum, stamped in gold, with yellow ties. The upper cover has a line and dot border with the date 1/8/1/9 arranged in the four corners. The title, TO JOHN RUSKIN ON HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY 1899, is enclosed in an oval of leaves. The final paste-down is stamped THE·DOVES·BINDERY·18C·S99.

William White, who acted as co-ordinator of the entire project, and who must have helped Pilley to a very large extent with the design of the Address, was curator of the Ruskin Museum in Sheffield. He had succeeded the first curator, Henry Swan, about 1889. In the following year, when the contents of the Guild Museum were transferred from Walkley to Meersbrook Park, he superintended the arrangements, and was also responsible for the layout of the new enlarged premises. In 1899 he was succeeded as curator by Gill Parker.

It appears that there was some bad feeling between Ruskin and White in 1899. It must at one time have been planned that White would have been in the party taking the Address to Brantwood. In the event, he was not, and the Address was taken to Ruskin by J. H. Whitehouse, secretary of the Birmingham Ruskin Society, and William Wardle, of the Liverpool Ruskin Society. The *Westmorland Gazette* reported that White was prevented by illness from attending the ceremony. There is also reference to White in the extract from Whitehouse's diary<sup>17</sup> which follows. Just what White had done to cause Brantwood's displeasure is not clear. But perhaps his illness was diplomatic.

7 February 1899. To Coniston to bear to Mr Ruskin the National

<sup>16</sup> In the manuscript Address Cobden-Sanderson's name appears without qualification. In the printed version (see below) he is described as "Master Book-Binder".

<sup>17</sup> The Diary is at Bembridge and is quoted by kind permission of the Lord Lloyd of Kilgerran.

address of congratulation promoted by the Ruskin Societies. I left Birmingham at 9 o'clock and reached Coniston at 4. I put up at the Dove Hotel<sup>18</sup> and after tea, I drove to Brantwood to arrange time of presenting address on the morrow. Saw Miss Severn who stated her mother was unwell and in bed and that it was feared Mr. Ruskin could not see us tomorrow, but that Mr. & Mrs. Severn hoped to receive us on his behalf. I replied that the address I bore was a national one, bearing among others the signature of the Prince of Wales<sup>19</sup> and that I hoped it would at least be possible for me to hand it to Mr. Ruskin personally. Miss Severn thought it might be managed and I arranged to call at 10.30 the next morning. On my drive to Brantwood I met W.G. Collingwood<sup>20</sup> who seemed rather odd and snappish. Drove back to the hotel through a heavy rain and then to the station to meet Wardle, the secretary of the Liverpool society. The Address also arrived at the station but minus the signatures which should have been sent with it from Sheffield by White. We had therefore to compile another list of signatories, as best we could from memory.

Collingwood came round in the evening and from his manner I gathered that a revulsion of feeling had taken place at Brantwood with regard to the Address and that we should be received by Mr. Ruskin. Collingwood said that it had been feared White from Sheffield Museum was coming with the address, and Mr. Ruskin did not want to see him. I could not gather what was the precise objection to White, but there was evidently a strong feeling against him at Brantwood. Collingwood further advised us in reading the Address to the Master to omit the reference to the painting of his portrait by Holman Hunt. Ruskin liked his works, but not his portraits and would not care to have his portrait painted by him. Collingwood added that if anyone painted it, it should be G.F. Watts. Under these circumstances we decided to omit the request. ...<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> In fact, the Crown Hotel, proprietor James Dove.

<sup>19</sup> This appears to be a slight exaggeration on Whitehouse's part! The Prince's name does not feature in the Address, though perhaps at one time it was hoped that he would subscribe to it.

<sup>20</sup> W.G. Collingwood, Ruskin's assistant and biographer, who lived at Lanehead, between Brantwood and the village of Coniston.

<sup>21</sup> The Address included a request for Ruskin to sit to Holman Hunt, the resulting portrait to become the property of the Guild of St. George. In *St. George*, ii. 111, Whitehouse reported the official reason for turning down the request: "Unfortunately, however, it is quite impossible for this proposal to be carried out, as Mr. Ruskin's health would not admit of him giving the necessary sittings. It is satisfactory therefore to know that Mr. Ruskin has already been twice painted in his old age—by Mr. W.G. Collingwood and Mr. Arthur Severn respectively".

Feb'y 8. The morning was fairly bright and clear and at 11 o'clock we started for Brantwood. It is a glorious road, going for some distance by the margin of the lake and commanding exquisite views. At Brantwood we were very politely received by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn. They explained that the Master felt equal to seeing us and had expressed a wish to do so. Mrs. Severn said that he was really wonderfully well and that although we should find him in his bedroom<sup>22</sup>, we were not to conclude from that, that he was ill. They did not want him to come downstairs as the staircase was rather narrow, &c. &c. We were then conducted to Mr. Ruskin's presence. He was dressed and sitting in an arm chair before a little table. As we entered he attempted to rise, but was evidently too feeble to do so. We shook hands and I told him I was glad to hear he was so well. I then explained that we brought him a national address, and I read it to him. As I was doing so, I occasionally heard him give a low exclamation—half sob it seemed to be. When I had finished he tried to reply but could only utter a few broken words. He was evidently deeply moved and quite overcome with emotion. After he had looked at the address we withdrew and when he had become more composed he dictated to Mrs. Severn a reply of which a copy is given at end of this entry<sup>23</sup>. What most impressed me when I saw the Master was his wonderful eyes. They are blue and very clear and bright. When, during the reading of the address, I looked up at him, I found them fixed upon me as though he were searching me through and through. No one who meets his eyes can doubt that his mind is perfectly clear.

With that, Whitehouse withdrew, and one would take that to be the end of the story of the 1899 Address. But not so—one or two mysteries remain.

In his diary for 7 February Whitehouse had written, "The Address had arrived at the station *but minus the signatures which*

<sup>22</sup> In an article "At Brantwood, 8th February 1899", in *St. George* ii, no. 6, 59-62, Whitehouse explained that Ruskin was not using his usual bedroom "as owing to the severity of the weather, and the weakness naturally arising from his advanced age, it has been thought wiser for him to remain chiefly in another room, which he temporarily uses both as a sleeping and living room". Whitehouse does not explain which room he meant by "usual bedroom". However, he probably meant the Turret Room, which Ruskin had originally vacated after an illness in 1878. Perhaps he had started to use it again. But it is a bitterly cold and draughty room, and Whitehouse probably met him in the next-door room, the bedroom in which Ruskin died on 20 January 1900.

<sup>23</sup> Whitehouse did not include the "reply" in his diary. However he did print it in his report in *St. George*, op. cit.: "Mr. Ruskin is deeply touched by the Address, and finds it difficult to give expression to his feelings of gratitude, but trusts they will be made known for him. He values the address highly, and thinks it charmingly done".

*should have been sent with it from Sheffield by White*" [my italics]. But the signatures—or at least the lists of names of those subscribing to the Address—form an integral part of the manuscript. Perhaps the clue is to be found (only) in the *Ulverston News*<sup>24</sup> of 11 February, where we read that "The signatures to the address, when completed, will include ..." Perhaps the *Ulverston News*, being a local paper, had not only used the Press Release used by all the other papers, but had also sent a reporter to Brantwood, and thus discovered that the Address had not been finished. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that there is no mention in most papers which used the Press Release of the proposed Holman Hunt portrait, and they almost all named the Prince of Wales as heading the list of signatories. Among the few mentioning the portrait are the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Carlisle Express*. The only papers which seem to mention the binder of the Address are the *Glasgow Evening News*, the local paper of the originators of the plan, and the *Westmorland Gazette* and *Ulverston News*, the two local papers for Coniston.

By a happy chance several letters have come to light recently which help to answer some of the problems arising in connection with the Address, and they help to complete the story. They make it clear that the Address *had* been presented in an incomplete state. Presumably only the first few pages—those actually containing the congratulatory address—had been written and illuminated and bound by Cobden-Sanderson, hence Whitehouse's need to compile the list of signatories from memory on the evening before the birthday. The Address must have been taken away again for completion.

The following letter<sup>25</sup> from Whitehouse's colleague at Brantwood, Wardle, to Cobden-Sanderson confirms that the Address was unfinished and helps to complete the story.

Mulberry Cottage,  
Wavertree,  
Liverpool  
17 April 1899

<sup>24</sup> Wardle compiled an album of newspaper cuttings about Ruskin's eightieth birthday, which he sent to Joan Severn on 3 March 1899. This volume is now at Bembridge and the newspaper reports have been examined in this volume.

<sup>25</sup> This, and the letters to Wardle, are in the collection of, and quoted by kind permission of, Mr. D. B. Wardle.

Dear Sir,

I had the privilege, with Mr. J. Howard Whitehouse, of taking the Illuminated Address (unfinished) to Mr. Ruskin on his birthday, and he was very pleased with it, and seemed specially pleased with the very beautiful vellum binding with which you were good enough to enrich it.

The address has taken far longer to complete than we expected, and it is in the Illuminator's hands still; but our hope is that we shall get it by St George's Day.

Do you think it would be best to enclose the address in a separate case and if so, would you do us the further favour of getting a suitable case? Of course at the expense of the Committee. If you think one should be specially made, will you kindly undertake this and let us know when it could be done. The Societies deeply regretted that so little time was given to you, and were well pleased that you were able in so short a time to make so beautiful a case.

I remain,

Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

William Wardle

The Address was not, in fact, completed by St. George's Day. Indeed they were still waiting two months later to pass the completed manuscript to Cobden-Sanderson. Cobden-Sanderson made the red morocco case to contain the Address, or at least the Doves Bindery did. The case is stamped in gilt on the upper cover

ADDRESS PRESENTED TO JOHN RUSKIN 1899.

The Doves Press stamp is on an inside edge of the box.

Probably about this time each page of the completed Address was photographed, probably in Sheffield under White's supervision. Perhaps sets of prints were supplied to all subscribing bodies, or were merely supplied on demand to interested Ruskinians. Certainly there is a set in one of Whitehouse's photograph albums. John Morgan, book collector and Ruskin admirer of Aberdeen, had a set<sup>26</sup> sent to him by Sinclair of the Glasgow society towards the end of 1899.

<sup>26</sup> Which he subsequently had bound and which is now in the collection of

In addition to being photographed, the text and list of signatories was also printed. The sixteen-page pamphlet has Silurian grey paper covers, which are lettered :

In Celebration/of/Professor Ruskin's/Eightieth Birthday/[Rule]/Text of the Illuminated Address,/and/List of Appended Signatories./

Page [1] of the pamphlet has the heading : "Text of Congratulatory Address/presented to/Professor Ruskin, M.A., LL.D., D.C.L., etc.,/on his eightieth birthday, February 8th, 1899". The list of names then continues from page [3] to page 15.

There is no imprint, but on the evidence of the watermark in the paper ("Loxley Bros. Sheffield") I would suggest that the pamphlet was printed in that city at the instigation of William White<sup>27</sup>.

Meanwhile, trouble was brewing in Sheffield. White was clearly not an easy man to get on with. Ruskin himself had opposed the move of the museum to Meersbrook Park and so was not likely to look with favour on the man who had superintended it. White also fell out with other Guild Companions, notably Mrs. Talbot, who had given a lot of property to the Guild. In 1892 he appealed to the Companions for extra funds to support the new museum. Mrs. Talbot, on the other hand, had opposed the move to Meersbrook on the grounds that Ruskin had wanted the Guild museum to be a *small* but choice collection. Later there was friction between White and the Sheffield Council and eventually a quarrel with some members of the Museum Committee. Perhaps the Council objected to White's activities in connection with the Address.

A letter from White to Wardle of 16 February 1899 gives a hint of the trouble that was to follow :

... It is very unfortunate that Mr Ruskin, and those who have strived [*sic*] to help him and do him honour, have always met with more opposition than anything else. Only those who know what it is—and few know the facts at all—can *feel* what it is to suffer passively for him. But this, please, I want kept as a secret.

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Mr. John Hutchinson of York, together with the two letters to John Morgan, quoted here with Mr. Hutchinson's permission. A second set of the photographs from the Morgan collection has been given by Mr. Hutchinson to the present writer.

<sup>27</sup> White's *The Principles of Art as illustrated by examples in the Ruskin Museum, Sheffield*, 1895, had, in fact, been printed by Loxley Brothers of Fargate, Sheffield, on an unwatermarked paper.

Then, in a long letter written three months later, on 19 May, White told Wardle the whole story of the dispute with Sheffield which finally led to his dismissal.

Dear Mr. Wardle,

Until now, as you have recognised, I have made some mysterious references to local affairs that I have wished—for the sake of the interests of the Museum alone—not to be known generally, and at present I am still waiting before I take any public step in exposure of the scandalous proceedings of the authorities here, both in their treatment of the Trustees of the Guild and of myself ...

You must know that, in consequence of the uncouth behaviour ... of two members of my Committee they took offence at my remonstrance with them, and thereupon set up utterly false charges against me, accusing me of incivility to visitors, but without bringing a single witness in evidence, and refusing to take any notice of my easy refutations of their *lies*—there is no other word for it. My detractors take no interest whatever in Mr. Ruskin, nor in the Museum—only in trying to prop up and patch up the worn-out old structure [Meersbrook Park] which it is impossible to keep weather-proof—and never have. Lacking refinement of thought, and having no capacity for appreciating anything Mr. Ruskin had to write about, they have made it as difficult for me to carry out Mr. Ruskin's purposes—the sole reason for my coming here—as possible ... and both I and the Trustees are being treated with ignominy in consequence. They [the Trustees] have spoken strongly in objection to such behaviour and have committed their views in writing formally ...

But the Council, on the supposition (*none* of this, nor my letter explaining why I could not tender my resignation, as urged verbally by my false accusers, having been brought before the Council) that the Committee had made a thorough investigation of the charges, voted as a majority in support of "the Committee"—to dismiss me! ... If anyone will take up the work with more devotion than I do, knowing as much as I do of the minute details of Mr. Ruskin's intentions and designs in this connection, by all means let me make way for him. But being innocent, I cannot quietly submit to such injustice, though if it were not for my love of Mr. Ruskin, and my anxiety lest his wishes and plans be desecrate and overthrown, it would be *the greatest happiness* to me to be free from the bitterness of disappointed hopes, and from the surroundings which make me miserable in this wilderness of basic slag and refuse. Why here, indeed?

With kind regards, and in good hopes that something may yet be done to *prevent* a public disgrace and scandal, I remain yours faithfully

Wm. White

Meanwhile in Glasgow on 23 June 1899, W. Craibe Angus, a fine art dealer with galleries in Renfield Street, was writing to John Morgan with the latest news of the Address.

Of course you know all about the Address to the Master. In a few days it will be out of the hands of Cobden-Sanderson, who, good soul that he is, is binding the address (in his best style) free of cost to the members. It will be on exhibition here till the Glasgow Sec[retar]y, who by the way, suggested the presentation of the address, takes it to Mr. Ruskin. The address has been very elaborately (and I hope artistically) decorated. I hope you may be in Glasgow that we shall have the pleasure of showing it to you. ...

Finally the Address was completed. The many pages of the names of the officers of the subscribing societies were finished by Albert Pilley; Cobden-Sanderson's Doves Bindery made the case to contain the bound Address. And in August William Sinclair, whose brain-child the Address had been, journeyed to Brantwood to present the manuscript for a second time. He described his visit in a letter to Wardle, who had been to Brantwood in February with Whitehouse:

Ravenscraig,  
Millport,  
Isle of Cumbrae, N.B.

Aug 14th 1899

Dear Mr. Wardle,

I arrived at the Waterhead Hotel at 9 o'clock on Wednesday and was pleasantly housed and cared for. On Thursday morning I was rowed to Brantwood and Mrs. Severn must have been on the lookout for me for she met me at the little landing stage. I received a princely reception. After being taken round the grounds I was taken into the drawing room and introduced to Mr. Severn. He took to me very pleasantly and said they intended to keep me all day, which they did. My meeting with the Master was of a deeply touching character for he was more feeble than I ever expected to see him. He was in the little turret bedroom, sitting on a chair beside the bed and seemed very pleased to see me. Mrs. Severn and I turned the pages of the Address and he smiled and nodded assent to the few words I spoke anent the Address. He looked up at me very shyly and tried to shake hands, but I am very sorry to say he could not do so. On leaving I kissed his hand and he bowed his head when I said good bye.

Mr. & Mrs. Severn could not have been kinder to me; they entertained me right royally. I rowed back to the Hotel from Brantwood



at midnight so you can easily understand we had sufficient time to talk over many matters of mutual interest.

On Friday I sailed in the Gondola to foot of Lake; it was oppressively warm. In the afternoon I left at 4 in Hotel dogcart which I engaged for myself and was driven to Windermere Station via Ambleside, surely one of the finest drives in England. I'll never forget it. I caught the London express at Oxenholme and was in Glasgow shortly after 11. On Saturday morning I came on here.

Yesterday I called on Professor Smart<sup>28</sup> who lives beside us here and told him of my visit to Brantwood in which he was deeply interested.

Under separate cover I am sending you newspaper cuttings anent Mr. White's dismissal. Please return them to me.

Accept thanks for kindness & k[ind] regards to all.

Ever yours

W. Sinclair

Sinclair had a last word on the Address in his letter of 3 November 1899 to Morgan.

My friend, Craibe Angus, has sent me your letter of yesterday's date and postal order for photos of National Address to Prof. Ruskin. Allow me to thank you very warmly for same, and to say that I have often heard of you and am proud to think of you as a distant Ruskinian of note. I only wish we were nearer each other so that we could become personally acquainted. You ask the artist's name who executed the National Address. Well, you will find it at the foot of the last page of photos,—the page that contains the names of the May Queens. Mr. Albert Pilley of Sheffield has been an ardent admirer of John Ruskin for many years, and it is questionable if there is his equal in all England as an Illuminator. He did the work under instruction from Mr. White, Curator at Ruskin Museum, Sheffield and the present writer. It was to him a labour of love and is the finest work he has yet done. The address was without question the most elaborate work of its kind ever presented to a great writer in England or out of it, and I need scarcely say I feel honoured in having originated the movement and carrying it to such a successful conclusion ...

If there is *one* thing which Ruskin research reveals, it is the fact that nothing in the world of Ruskin is ever as straightforward as at first appears. Who would have expected the "most elaborate work of its kind" to have been incomplete when originally presented to him?

<sup>28</sup> William Smart, one-time Adam Smith Professor of Political Economy in the University of Glasgow, was a Past President of the Ruskin Society of Glasgow.