

A CALENDAR OF
TREASURES FROM
THE RUSKIN
COLLECTION
(with additional material)

FEBRUARY

Guild of St George
With thanks to Museums Sheffield

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Edited & designed by Stuart Eagles

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GUILD of St GEORGE

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Welcome to Ruskin's Guild of St George

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a polymath. As a writer, he commanded international respect. He was an art critic and an art patron, a skilled draughtsman and talented watercolourist, and a fierce critic of prevailing social and political norms. He wrote about nature and architecture, craftsmanship, geology, botany, Greek myth, education—a dizzying variety of subjects. Driven by his deep faith in social justice, he established the Guild of St George in the 1870s to right some of the social wrongs of the day and make England a happier and more beautiful place in which to live and work.

RUSKIN AND POLITICS

The founding aim of the Guild was to acquire land and—through labour, wind and water power—to bring it into useful production.

News

3rd John Ruskin Prize

The Guild of St George, The Pilgrim Trust and The Big Draw are pleased to announce the winners of the 3rd John Ruskin Prize. [More...](#)

RIP Dr Michael Hudson

We are sad to report the death on 24th January of Companion Dr Michael Hudson. [More...](#)

FEBRUARY 1



Feast of St Tryphon

Charles Fairfax Murray: "St Tryphonius taming the Basilisk" after Carpaccio (1877). Murray's watercolour is a small detail from a large-scale painting which shows St Tryphon exorcising a demon from the daughter of the Roman Emperor Gordianus. The original work is part of a cycle of paintings in the Scuola of San Giorgio degli Schiavoni in Venice, which Carpaccio painted between 1502 and 1507. Ruskin commissioned this work from Murray, along with others from the cycle, to assist him with his book, "St Mark's Rest". In general, Ruskin admired the work of Carpaccio, finding great truthfulness and expressiveness in it. Ruskin found this scene rather strange, however, and wrote: "was ever [depicted] so simple a saint, ever so absurd a beast? as if the absurdity of all heraldic beasts that ever were, had been hatched into one perfect absurdity - prancing there on the steps of the throne, self-satisfied; - this the beast whose glance is mortal! And little St Tryphonius, with nothing remarkable about him more than is in every good little boy".

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

On This Day in 2015: RUSKIN in SHEFFIELD was launched at Walkley Community Centre. Look back at a fruitful and inspiring year of walks, talks and other events helping to reconnect Sheffield's communities with Ruskin's legacy. Visit <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/ruskin-in-sheffield/>

RUSKIN
in SHEFFIELD

FEBRUARY 2

Presentation of Christ in the Temple

Charles Fairfax Murray "Angel Musicians from Presentation of Christ in the Temple" after Carpaccio (1877).

This is a small detail from an original work by Vittore Carpaccio, painted in 1510 for the church of San Giobbe in Venice. The whole shows an important story from the life of Christ, in which his mother Mary takes him to the synagogue for the first time. There Christ is presented to Simeon the High Priest. Carpaccio's painting is very decorative and includes many incidental details. These angels appear at the bottom of the work, on steps beneath Mary and Simeon's feet. Unlike Carpaccio's strongly defined painting, Murray's copy is rather schematic, even blurry, so that he captures Carpaccio's use of colour and light, rather than the exact appearance of the original painting. Murray copied the work in its current home, Venice's Accademia Gallery. Ruskin said that Carpaccio's original painting was the "best" in the Accademia and there are several other copies from it in the Ruskin Collection. Murray copied embroidered details from Simeon's robes, and Angelo Alessandri copied the entire altarpiece.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



FEBRUARY 3

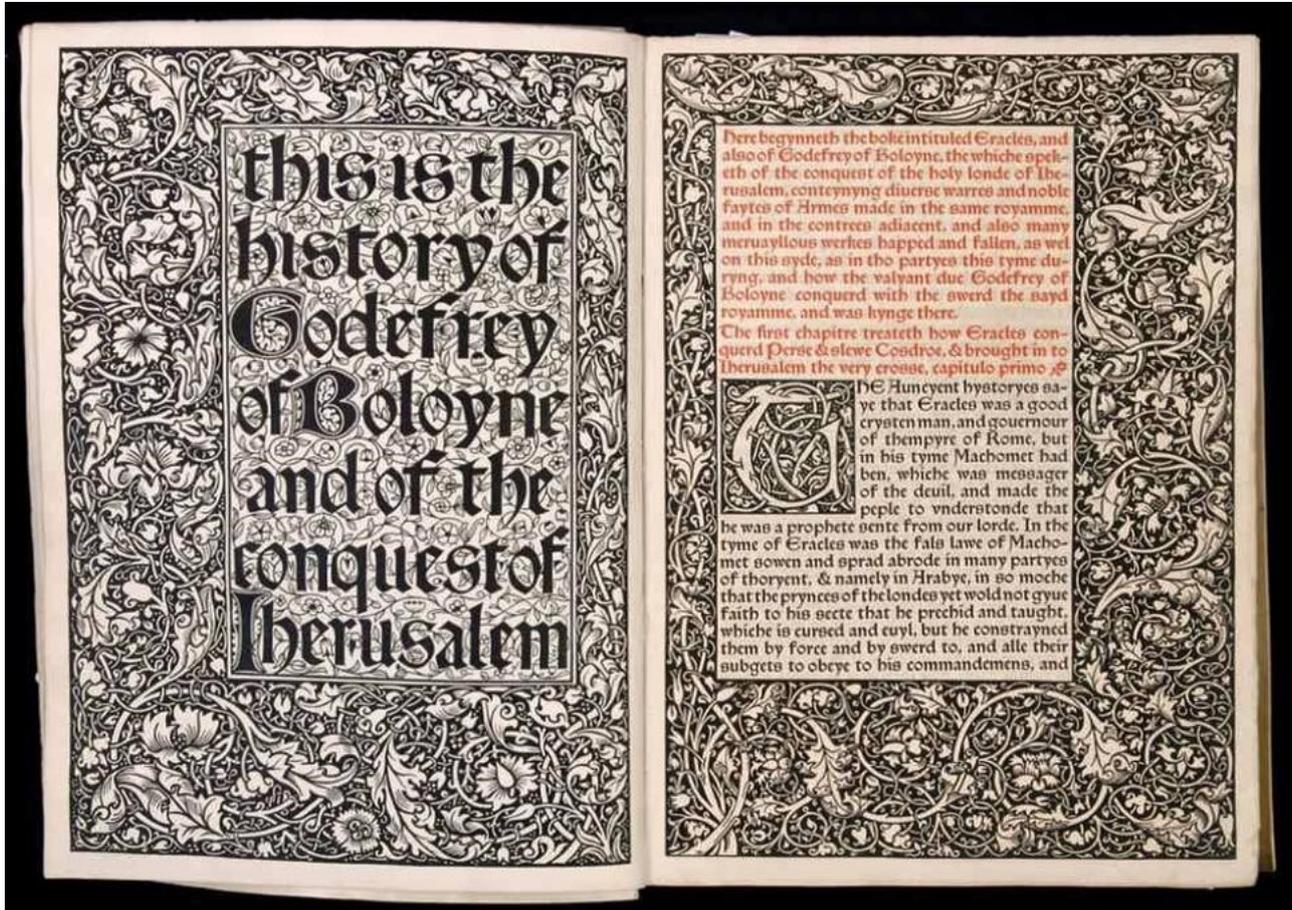


On This Day: John Gould died 1881.

"*Atrichia rufescens*" (or Rufous Scrub-bird) after John Gould (1804-1881) a handcoloured lithograph from EXTINCT AND ENDANGERED BIRDS OF AUSTRALIA.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

FEBRUARY 4



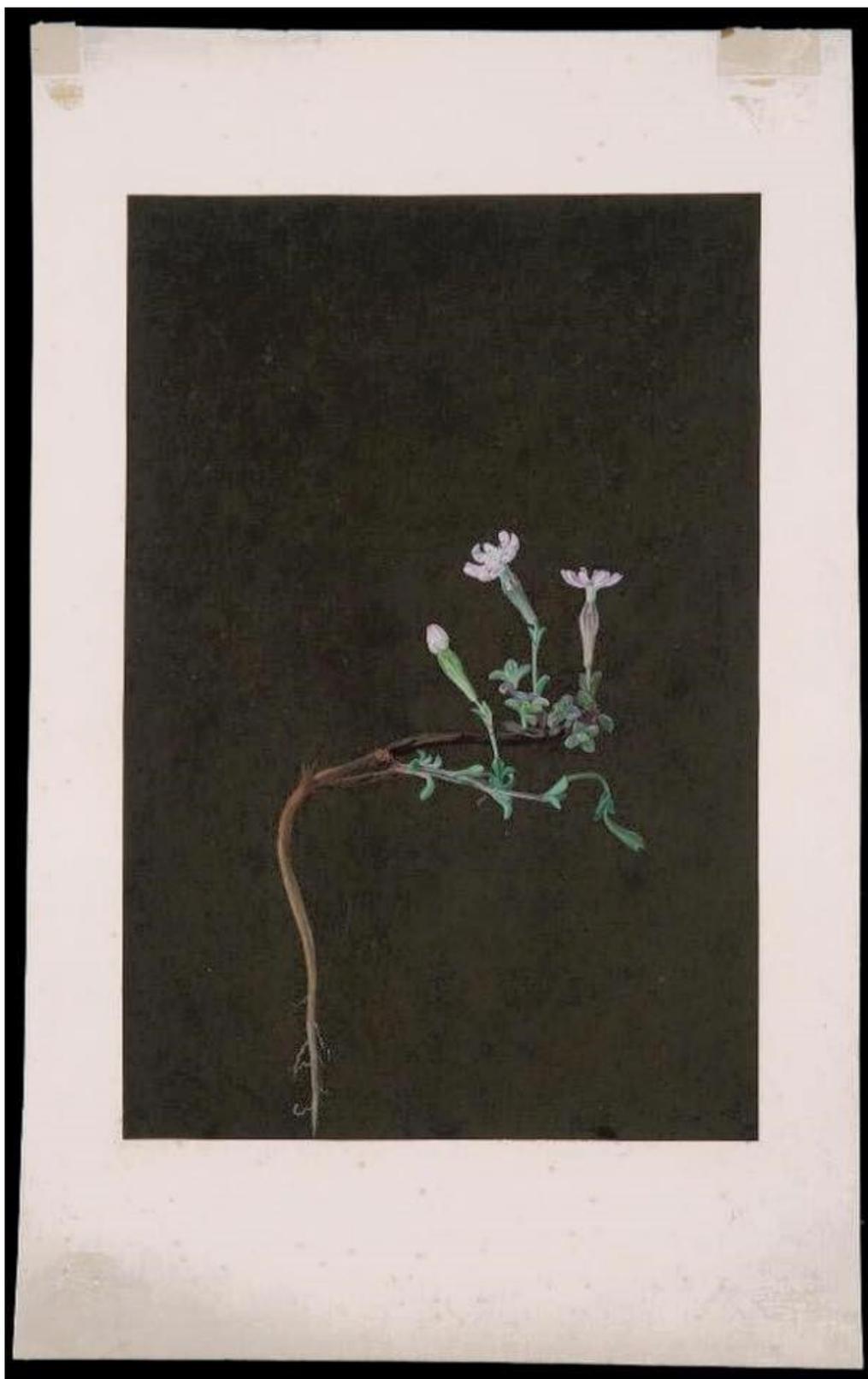
A Kelmscott Press edition of William Caxton, "The History of Godefrey of Boloyne and of the Conquest of Jerusalem"(1893).

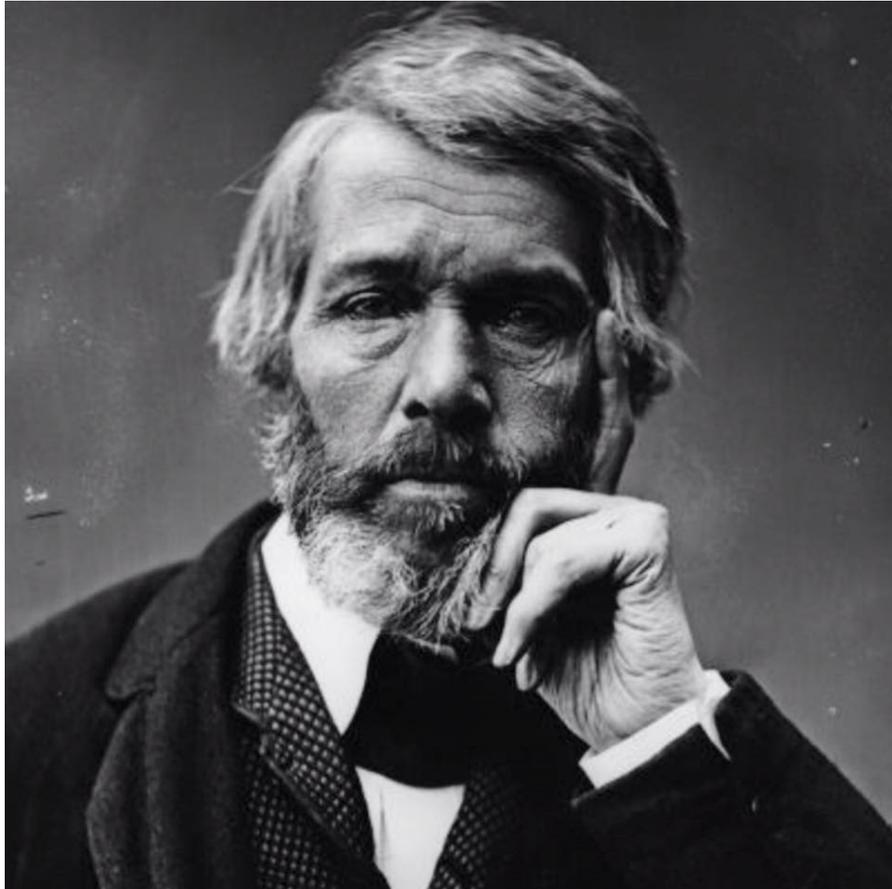
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

FEBRUARY 5

"Flower Study with the Root" (c. 1880) by Charlotte C Murray, an obscure but fine artist whose flower drawings are among the finest examples in the Collection.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>





On This Day (1881) Thomas Carlyle died.

Carlyle and Ruskin were great friends. Carlyle's influence on Ruskin was greater than Ruskin's influence on him, but Carlyle nevertheless had great respect for Ruskin. This is the older man writing to Ruskin about the latter's FORS CLAVIGERA (his letters to the workmen and labourers of Great Britain in which, among other things, Ruskin worked out his scheme for the Guild of St George):

"This 'Fors Clavigera,' Letter 5th, which I have just finished reading, is incomparable; a quasi-sacred consolation to me, which almost brings tears into my eyes! Every word of it is as if spoken, not out of my poor heart only, but out of the eternal skies; words winged with Empyrean wisdom, piercing as lightning,—and which I really do not remember to have heard the like of. Continue, while you have such utterances in you, to give them voice. They will find and force entrance into human hearts, whatever the 'angle of incidence' may be; that is to say, whether, for the degraded and inhuman Blockheadism we, so-called 'men,' have mostly become, you come in upon them at the broadside, at the top, or even at the bottom. Euge, Euge!" (April 30, 1871). (With thanks to Sara Atwood.)

Read 'Carlyle and Ruskin: An Influential Friendship' by Charles H. Kegel on the Guild's growing new Resources page: <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/resources/>

FEBRUARY 6

"The Church of San Nicola, Pisa, Italy" (1882) by Angelo Alessandri (1854-1931).

This view shows San Nicola's irregular building structure and patchy decorative scheme. Most of the decoration dates from the 1100s, and comprises marble facing and a type of ornamentation known as "marble intarsia". This is made by cutting different coloured stones into shapes to create a mosaic effect. Ruskin greatly admired this type of decoration, partly because he saw it as an example of craftsmen humbly celebrating nature by making use of simple but



effective shapes and naturally decorative materials. Ruskin also commissioned watercolours of the marble wall and its decorative detail in an effort to encourage architects in Britain to design more colourful buildings. He described the set as "exquisite" and "the most beautiful drawings of architecture [that he] ever had". It is likely that JE Southall, the architect Ruskin commissioned to design a new St George's Museum in Bewdley, Worcestershire saw these watercolours. His proposed designs for the decoration of that building that was never built are very similar. (See January 15.)

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

FEBRUARY 7

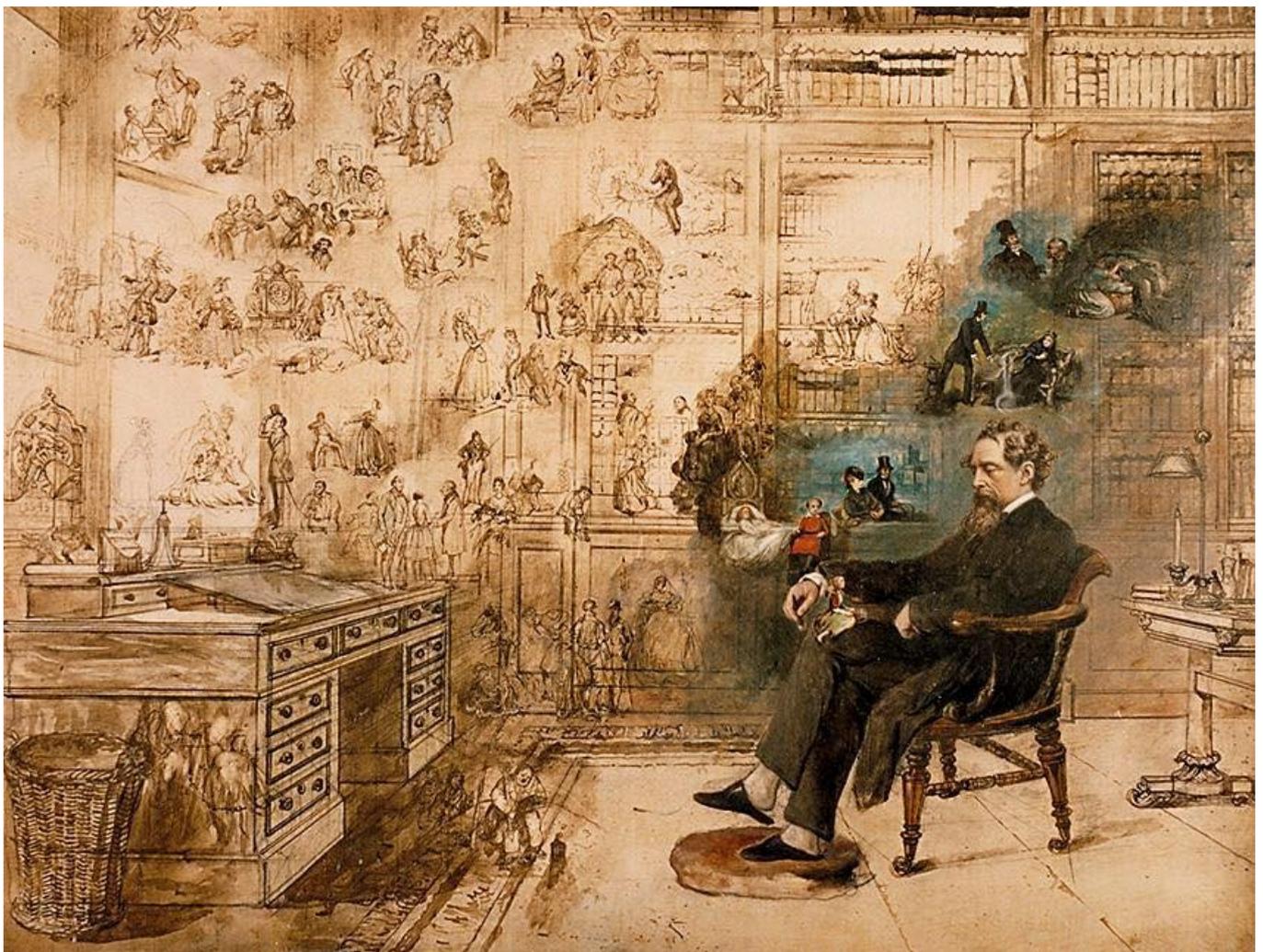


On This Day (1812): Charles Dickens was born. John Leech, "I say Charley, that's a jeuced fine Gurl" (1846). This is a preliminary drawing for one of Leech's cartoons, which he drew for the magazine, Punch. The finished cartoon appeared in 1846 and was part of his comic series, "The Rising Generation." In this series Leech lampooned the fashion among

children to act like adults. In general he shows the children copying adult extravagances or more ridiculous behaviour, but Charles Dickens, whose early novels Leech illustrated, commented on the pathos of these cartoons. Ruskin greatly admired Leech's work, writing that he was an "absolute master of the elements of character." He added that Leech's drawings gave "the finest definition and natural history of the classes of our society, the kindest and subtlest analysis of its foibles, [and] the tenderest flattery of its pretty and well-bred ways." He saw that although Leech's drawings might focus on the grotesque or ugly, they were truthful and keenly observed, qualities that Ruskin always celebrated in art.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

On This Day (1812) Charles Dickens was born. Ruskin admired Dickens and often referred to his works and characters. He thought *HARD TIMES* Dickens' greatest novel (largely because of its critique of utilitarian political economy). He claimed that he knew *PICKWICK PAPERS* almost "by heart". He sent Dickens at least one of his signed books as a gift. However, Ruskin also wrote of the "diseased extravagance" of *THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP*, and dismissed *BARNABY RUDGE* as "a stupid novel". Ruskin considered Dickens an accomplished performer who nevertheless lacked subtlety and nobility of style and sentiment. Dickens wrote, he said, in a footnote to *UNTO THIS LAST*, in a "circle of stage fire" - a method of calculated exaggeration intended to intensify his readers' emotional response. For his part, Dickens dismissed the Pre-Raphaelites as ridiculous. But he read, with apparent admiration, Ruskin's *SEVEN LAMPS OF ARCHITECTURE*. Ruskin concluded that "[Dickens'] view," - at least in *HARD TIMES* - "was finally the right one, grossly and sharply told". <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk>



FEBRUARY 8



On This Day (1819): John Ruskin was born.

The Ruskin Collection contains relatively few drawings and watercolours by Ruskin himself. This is arguably the gem of that small grouping, however.

John Ruskin, "The Matterhorn from the Moat of the Riffelhorn" (1849) [Mont Cervin/ Monte Cervino].

This is one of several Matterhorn studies that Ruskin made in order to illustrate his book MODERN PAINTERS, Volume IV, which he sub-titled "Of Mountain Beauty". He drew it from different angles so that readers could trace the contours around the mountain. Ruskin later wrote that his drawings for MP IV were "the first faithful drawings" of the Alps. He felt that geologists had made their studies of the Matterhorn "under the influence of considerable excitement" owing to its unusual shape. He therefore photographed the mountain, too, checking the accuracy of his studies. At that time, no one had ever climbed the Matterhorn, so illustrations of it were necessarily imprecise. Nevertheless, Ruskin's mentor in geological studies, James Forbes, had encouraged him to take a scientific interest in its rock structure and Ruskin tried to show that the act of spending time drawing mountains from different angles and distances helped one to see them with greater understanding. This image is available as a greetings card from our shop (ref. C9): <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/shop/>

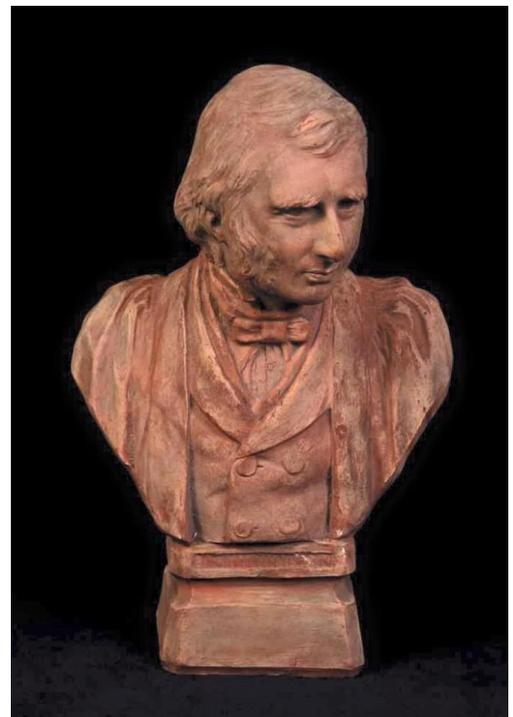
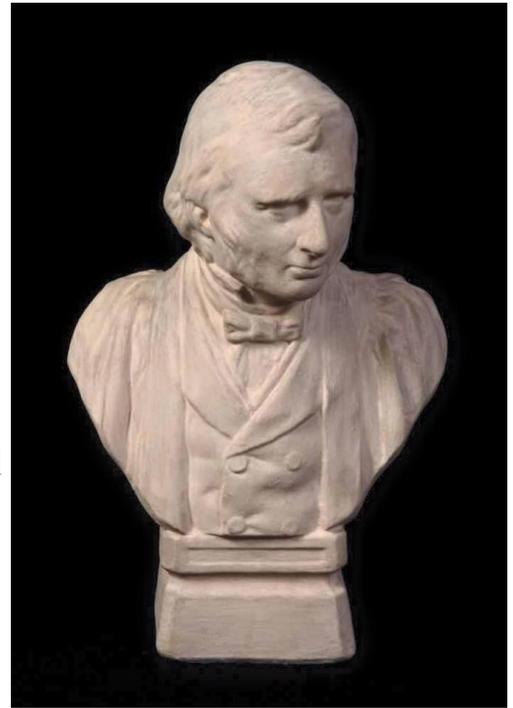
ON THIS DAY in 1819: John Ruskin was born.

Happy 197th birthday, Ruskin!

In 1871, John Ruskin decided to take practical action to make the world a better place to live in. He founded a utopian society that became known as the Guild of St George. Now the Guild strives to promote Ruskin's values in a modern setting. The charity for arts, crafts and the rural economy runs a series of projects to reconnect people and places in an ongoing exploration of Ruskin's legacy. It owns woodland and property in the Wyre Forest, arts and crafts houses in Westmill, Hertfordshire, a wildflower meadow in Sheepscombe, Gloucestershire, and an exemplary educational art collection (The Ruskin Collection) free to visit at its own dedicated gallery in Museums Sheffield's Millennium Gallery.

Explore the Guild's history online, read about its work today and download articles and other resources about Ruskin and his enduring legacy: <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk>

The images of Ruskin are a portrait by an unknown artist (1842) and two portrait busts by Benjamin Creswick (1877, 1887) both TREASURES OF THE RUSKIN COLLECTION.



2019
Ruskin

Happy birthday John Ruskin. Plans for his bi-centenary are already well-advanced.

FEBRUARY 9

Ann Elizabeth Seaton: "Study of a Peacock's Tail Feather" (1876-1879).

Seaton may have painted this feather in response to Ruskin's suggestion that people should draw feathers to enter "a new world of beauty". In his book of drawing lessons, "The Laws of Fésolé", Ruskin set out detailed instructions for drawing feathers, so that students would study both their structure and the gradation of colour in each part of them. Ruskin thought that the "spirit and power" of the peacock was in the eyes of its tail; he wrote of the tail feather's apparent symmetry of structure, but noted the tilted angle of the eye and the spectrum of its colours, which are so much bolder as a whole than in the individual filaments of the feather. This watercolour very clearly shows these elements.

Currently on show at the Ruskin Library, University of Lancaster.

Explore the Ruskin Collection online. Image available as a greetings card (ref. C24) download our catalogue: <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/.../2016/>



FEBRUARY 10



On This Day (1852)
Samuel Prout died.
"The Bridge of Sighs,
Venice" by Samuel
Prout.

Ruskin was familiar
with Prout's work
from childhood,
sometimes copying his
style of drawing with
its intricate outlining
of detail. Ruskin's
father collected Prout's
work, and together
with his son visited the
places Prout drew. As
an adult Ruskin
championed Prout
saying "there is
nothing but the work
of Prout which is true,
living or right, in its
general impression,
and nothing, therefore,
so inexhaustibly
agreeable." He also
praised his works
because they were
"faithful and fond"
records of buildings
and towns spoiled by
industry and
modernisation. Ruskin

was not so impressed by the famous Bridge of Sighs itself, saying it was "a work of no merit... owning the interest it possesses chiefly to its pretty name." He was more struck by the Rio façade of the Doge's Palace (the building to the left) saying its brickwork was "one of the finest things not only in Venice, but in the world. ... there are few things more impressive than the vision of it overhead, as the gondola glides from beneath the Bridge of Sighs."

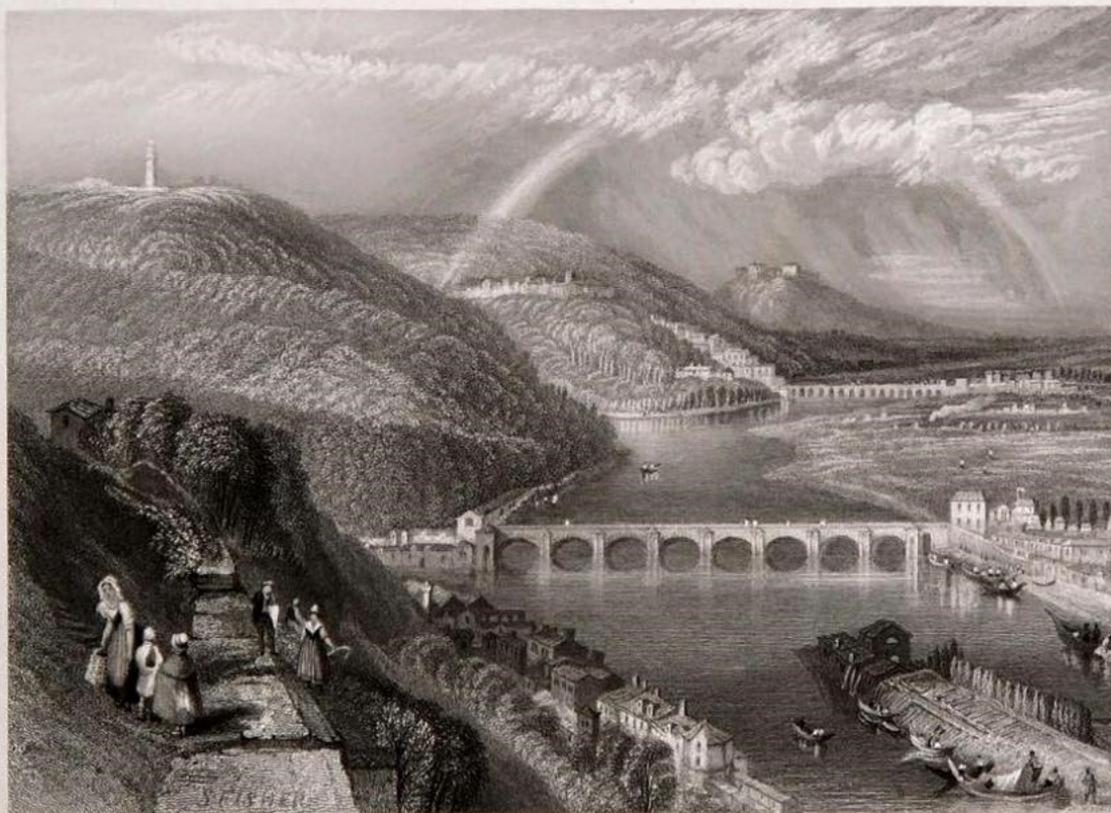
Explore the Ruskin Collection Online: <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

Today is also the birthday of the Master of the Guild. Happy birthday, Clive Wilmer, poet, scholar and Fellow of Sidney Sussex, Cambridge.

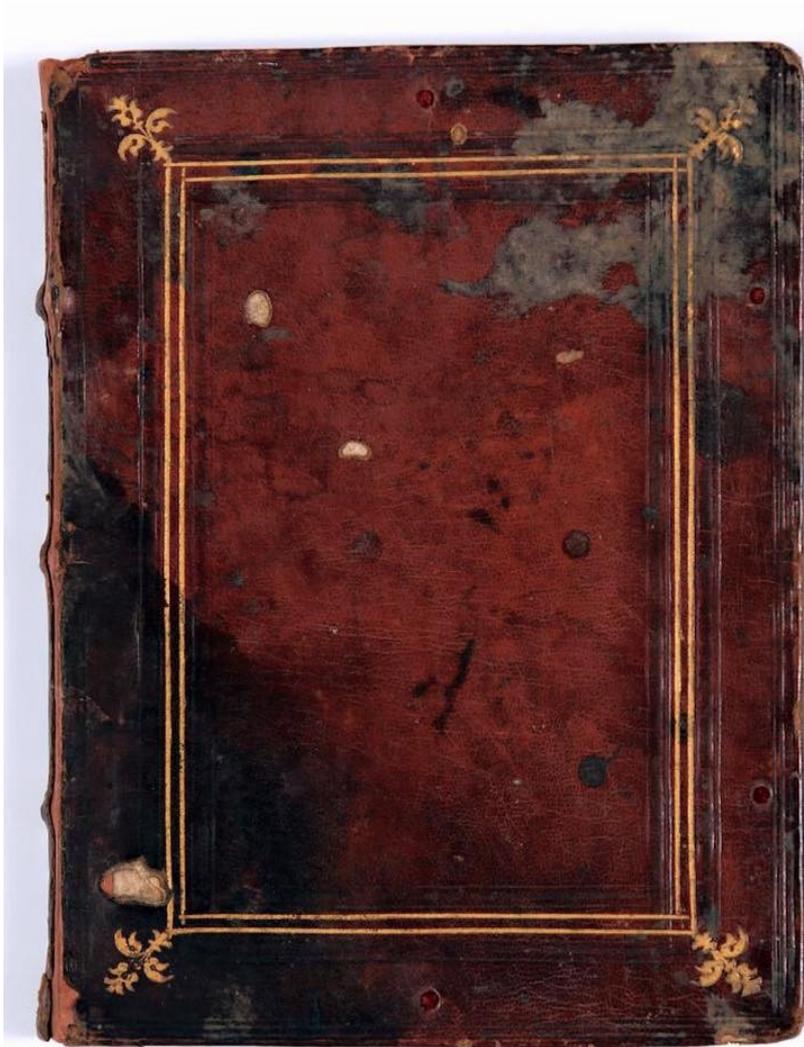
FEBRUARY 11

Samuel Fisher (c. 1805-1851) "Bridge of St Cloud, from Sèvres, France" (1838) an engraving after Turner.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



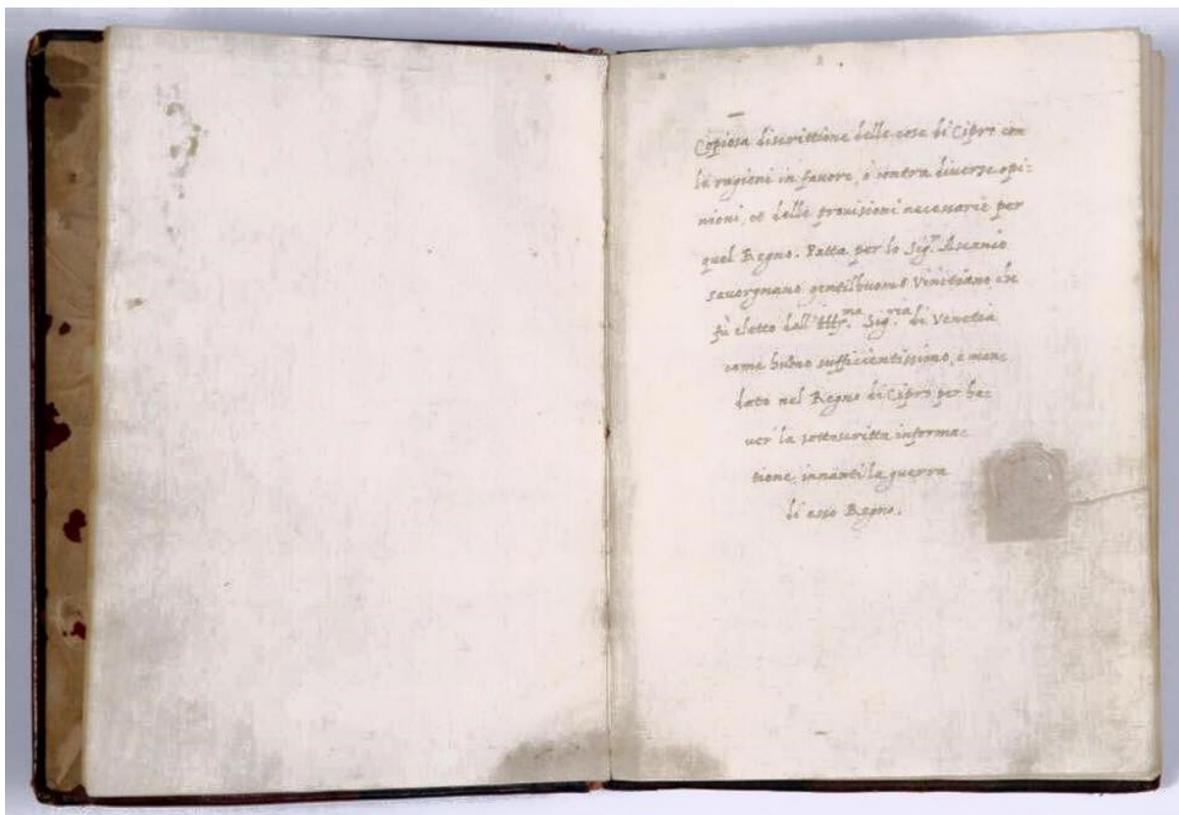
FEBRUARY 12



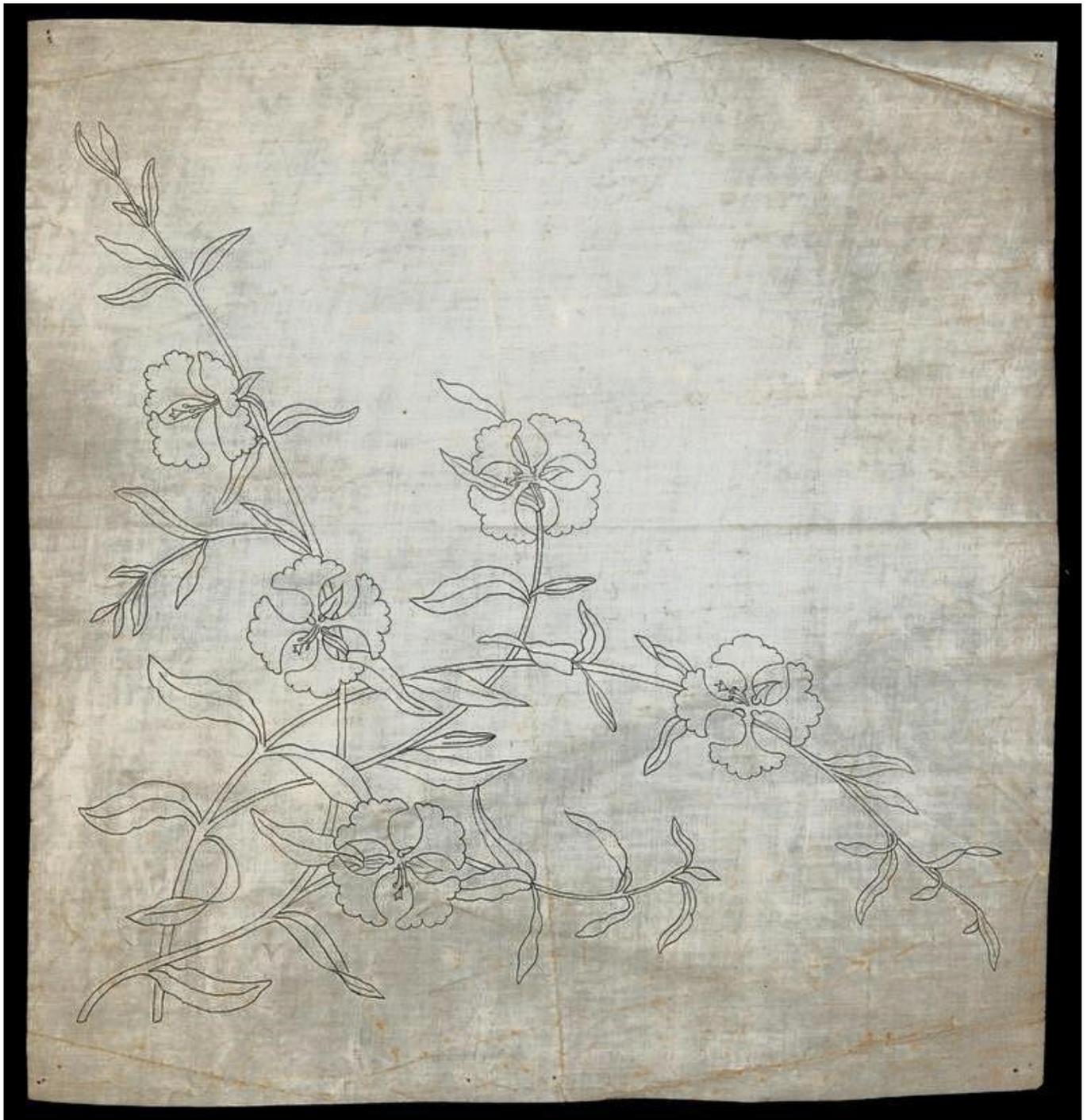
"Description of the Affairs of Cyprus" (1571) a manuscript by the Italian engineer, Ascanio Savorgnano.

Savorgnano was an engineer specialising in military fortifications. In 1562 the Signoria, or government, of Venice sent Savorgnano to Cyprus which was then part of the Venetian Empire. Here he had to make detailed notes on its defences and make recommendations for - and design - improvements. It is possible he was a Venetian himself and was employed by the Signoria to carry out similar tasks in other areas and cities under Venetian rule.

<http://www.gulldofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



FEBRUARY 13



Floral textile pattern from the late 19th Century, possibly by Marian Twelves (1843-1929). It is the work of the Ruskin Linen Industry, first of Lansdale then of Keswick. Ruskin admired the revival of such handicrafts and agreed to the adoption of his name to describe (or "brand") the linen goods. The project was an unofficial part of the Guild of St George's early activity and the connection continued until Twelves' death.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

FEBRUARY 14

Happy Valentine's Day.

"Love Reigning over the Elements," (c. 1877) a design for stained glass By Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones.

"Love Reigning over the Elements" is a symbolic work which promotes ideas of harmony and happiness. It shows the four traditional elements: Earth, beneath Love's feet, and Water in front. 'Fire' is to the viewer's left, with the sun and moon, representing Air, in the background. Burne-Jones made the design for his close friend, the designer, William Morris. It was intended for use as a window in Morris's home, Red House. The finished design was placed in a corridor leading to the garden. The design is very similar to one by another friend of Morris's, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, entitled "Dantis Amor" (made in 1860 to decorate a settle also intended for Red House). It relates closely to Dante's "The Divine Comedy" (written in the early 1300s) which ends with the line, "Love that moves the sun and the other stars."

<http://>

www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/



FEBRUARY 15

On This Day 1809: birth of Owen Jones.

"Illuminated Manuscripts, No. 2" from "The Grammar of Ornament" Plate LXXII (1856) after Owen Jones (1809-1874).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>





On This Day 1949: Margaret (or Marguerite) Emily Knight died.

An heir to the Knight's soap fortune, Margaret cared passionately about the English landscape. She never married and, after the death of her parents, she went to live in the Gloucestershire village of Sheepscombe. Fearing that the land above her cottage would be used for cheap housing, she bought it and entrusted it 80 years ago to the care of Ruskin's Guild. St George's Field, as it has come to be known, is a

wildflower meadow, overlooking the valley, next to the cricket ground saved for the village by the writer, Laurie Lee. Still owned by the Guild, it is managed by Natural England, a "small piece of English ground—beautiful, peaceful and fruitful," enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. Read its story in a new full-colour booklet by Stuart Eagles available from our shop.



FEBRUARY 16

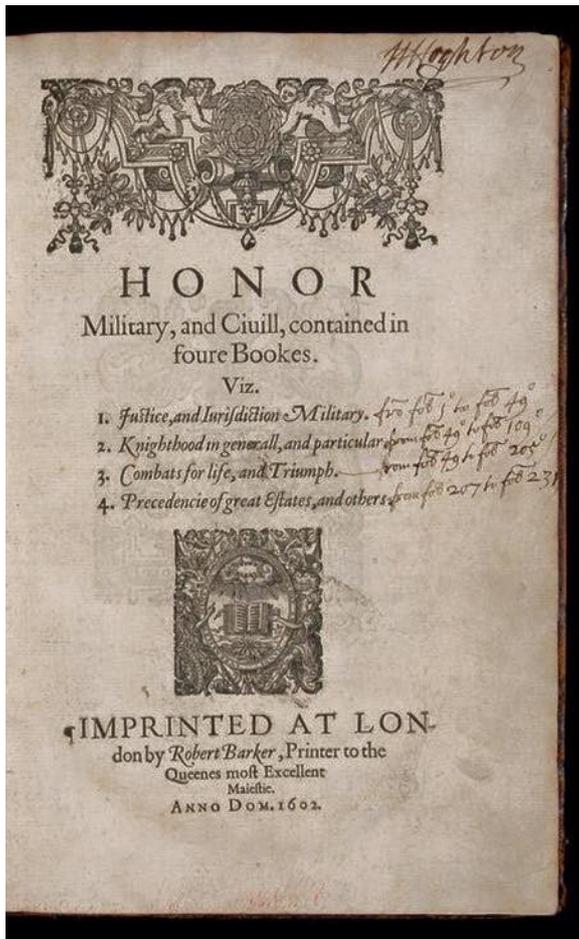
Henry Stacy Marks, "Study of Two Vultures" (1877).

Ruskin and Marks shared an interest in natural history drawings and enjoyed trips to London Zoo where they spent time at the aviaries. During 1877, Marks was working on wall paintings that included birds painted for the Duke of Westminster. Marks sent some of his bird studies to Ruskin. Ruskin was delighted with them and added them to his teaching collection at Oxford. He intended to use them in his lectures as "examples of true natural history drawing" and said that they were "the first perfect pictures of birds." It seems, however, that Marks didn't send Ruskin a sufficient number of studies for him to use in lectures, so Ruskin sent them on to Sheffield. Here, Marks has drawn two vultures. When he received the study, Ruskin wrote to him: "I've been gloating like a good vulture over those vultures ever since I got them."

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



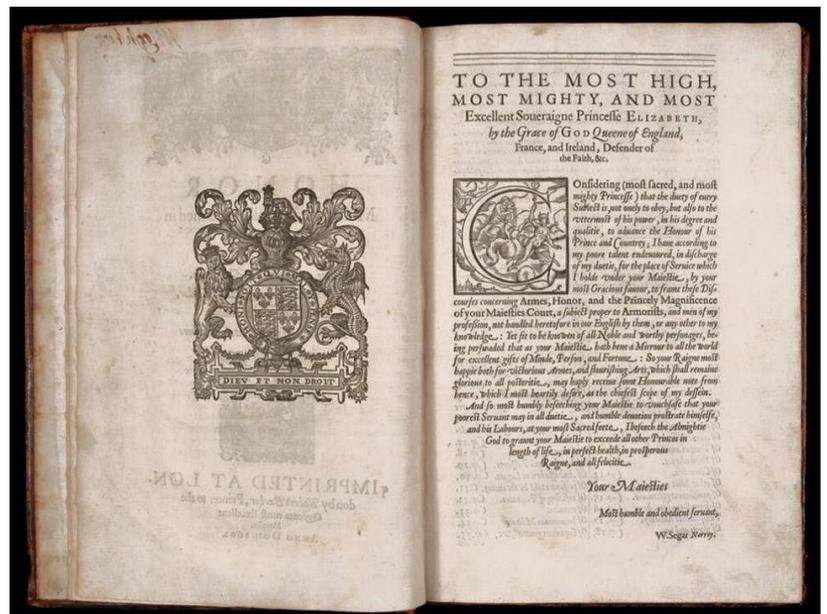
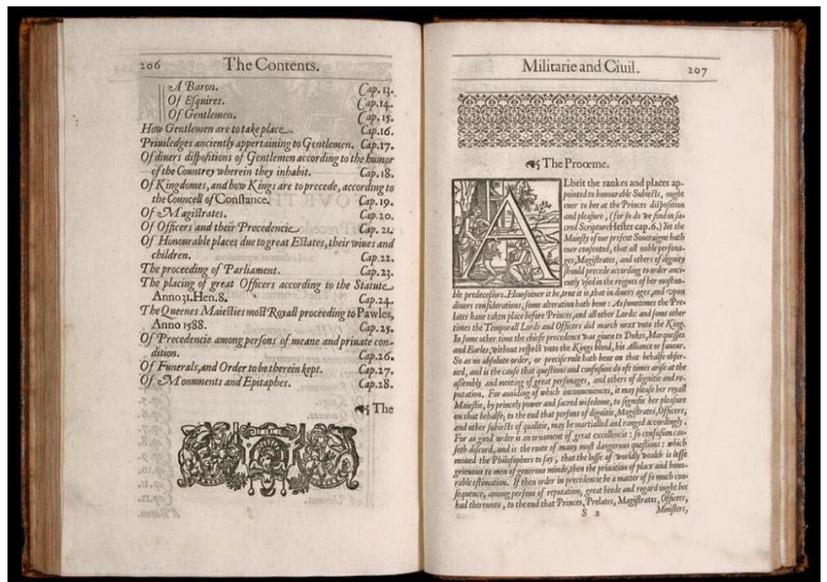
FEBRUARY 17



William Segar (1554-1633), "Honor, Military, and Civill, contained in foure Bookes" (1602).

Segar was a portrait painter and officer of arms to the Elizabethan court when he wrote this book, which was an expanded and illustrated edition of "The Booke of Honour and Armes" first published in 1590. He went on to be Garter King of Arms under James I. He was knighted in 1616.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



FEBRUARY 18

Charles Fairfax Murray, "The Master of Ceremonies" detail from "The Return of the English Ambassadors" after Carpaccio (1877).

This watercolour shows a small portion of a painting that is one of a series of nine. Together they unfold the story of St Ursula. Charles Fairfax Murray copied a number of these details from original large-scale paintings by the Venetian artist Vittore Carpaccio (c. 1460-1526). Carpaccio produced this cycle of paintings in tempera (a paint that used egg-white), between 1490 and 1496 for the Confraternity of St Ursula in Venice. Today these paintings are still in Venice and are displayed in the Accademia Gallery. This particular detail is from the third canvas in the series, "The Return of the English Ambassadors".

It does not show any of the main characters from the story. Instead, it focuses on a figure, the Master of Ceremonies, who is sitting to one side of the main scene. Behind him is the quayside, and he looks towards a large crowd of people surrounding the main scene, where people kneel in front of an enthroned figure. In the story, the ambassadors have just arrived in England and are telling the King about the success of their visit to Brittany. Their boats can be seen behind the Master of Ceremonies and the whole scene is set against a background of ornate buildings.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



FEBRUARY 19

Letter from Charles Randal (1851-1928) to Fanny Randal; with illustration entitled "Modern Artists" (1882). This drawing by Charles Randal shows his brother, Frank (well-represented in the Collection), Ruskin and W. G. Collingwood as "Modern Artists", representing their visit together to France. Charles Randal has drawn his brother Frank and Collingwood as dandies, with feathers in their caps (and Collingwood's cap is falling over his eyes) while Ruskin, who has a generous



cravat, is holding his two artists by the hands. Underneath the title Randal indicates that a third artist is arriving in the train drawn in the background - Charles Gilder Maundrell (1860-1924).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

FEBRUARY 20

J. M. W. Turner, "Bonneville, Savoy" from "Liber Studiorum" (1816).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



FEBRUARY 21

Angelo Alessandri (1854-1931): Study of Adam and Eve from "The Paradise" after Tintoretto (1883).

Ruskin considered Tintoretto's "Paradiso" (or "The Paradise") "the most precious thing Venice possesses" and the greatest work Tintoretto ever created. It is over 10 metres tall and 25 metres wide and covers an entire wall of the council chamber in the Doge's Palace. This painting depicts only a detail.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>





On This Day in 1879, the first Annual General Meeting of the Guild of St George was held in Birmingham's Queen's Hotel. Pictured from Stephenson Street, it was part of the New Street railway station complex demolished and rebuilt in the 1960s. Ruskin was not present at the meeting but the Curator of his Museum at Walkley, Sheffield, Henry Swan (1825-1889), read out a statement from him. The recent Mayor of Birmingham, Alderman George Baker (1825-1910) - who would succeed Ruskin as Master of the Guild in 1900 - took the Chair. Ruskin was declared Master for life - a motion proposed by the Bolton colliery owner and engineer, Herbert Fletcher (1842-1895), and seconded by the Birmingham architect, John Henry Chamberlain (1831-1883). Robert Somervell (1851-1933) of Kendal - a member of the family firm, K Shoes - was appointed Secretary. He would go on to be a Master and Bursar at Harrow School. The stage was set for years to come... Explore a growing online Guild Archive, which includes a list of "The First 70 Years" of Guild AGMs: <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/guild-history/>

FEBRUARY 22



Angelo Alessandri: Study of "The Paradise" (1886-1905) after Tintoretto. [See also February 21.]

This copy depicts only the central portion of Tintoretto's "Paradiso" (or "The Paradise").

Ruskin was anxious that Tintoretto's work, which dates from 1588, would be ruined by "restoration". He wrote that contemporary Venetian artists, "finding [the painting] exceedingly unlike their own works declare it to want harmony and are going to retouch it to their own ideas of perfection." He therefore commissioned this copy from Alessandri, who understandably was worried by the massive scale of the work. Ruskin reassured him: "Of course you can't do it quite like Tintoretto. Who could? But you will make a most precious work for all time to come - for others will copy it again and again and it will teach artists yet unborn."

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

FEBRUARY 23

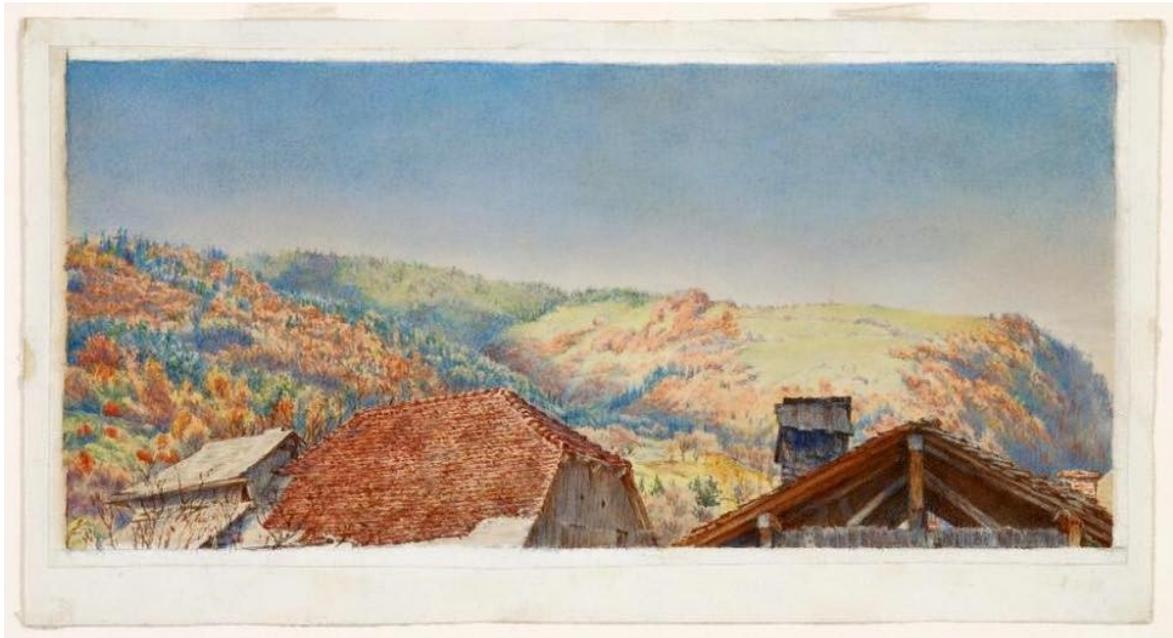
Thomas Matthews Rooke, "Study of Apple Blossom" (1871).

A touch of spring for a winter's day: Ruskin considered apple blossom to have "a separate queendom" to other flowers.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



FEBRUARY 24



Isabella Jay (1841-1919): "The Brezon, Cluses, France" (1885).

Isabella Jay painted this detail from a drawing by Thomas Matthews Rooke. He described it as "A View from Mornex looking to the right and taking the heights of the Brezon, above Bonneville". Rooke drew this, after he had received a commission from Ruskin: "I want Savoy cottages, distant villages...all in that valley are overwhelmingly lovely in Autumn." Although the impressive mountain scenery of the Alps had thrilled Ruskin since childhood, he also felt that the picturesque villages added a humble, human element that emphasised the power and majesty of nature. As an 18 year-old, Ruskin wrote about the humility of Swiss chalets: "... passing up towards the flank of a smooth green mountain...I first encountered ...the unobtrusive, yet beautiful, front of the Swiss cottage. I thought it the loveliest piece of architecture I had ever had the felicity of contemplating... it always suggests ideas of a gentle, pure and pastoral life." Later, Ruskin also wrote about the mountains depicted in the background: "...the superiority of the mountains to the lowland, in loveliness of colour, perfectness of form, endlessness of change, and wonderfulness of structure... is as measurable as the richness of a painted window matched with a white one." Ruskin was a regular traveller in this area, and included in "Deucalion" - his book about minerals - a chapter entitled "The Valley of the Cluse". The mountains satisfied his fascination with mountain and rock formations, and the Alpine villages and landscapes provided a picturesque background for his love of beauty. In 1862, Ruskin decided to retire to Bonneville, about 10 miles from Sallenches. Ruskin intended to buy land and build a home that was high up in the mountains, partly as a retreat removed from his family and partly to try to invent ways to improve the farming land in the area and help the local people. In the end, Ruskin did not buy the land, and sold some other land he had bought near Chamonix after tourism started to affect the area (in his view) adversely. Instead, Ruskin bought Brantwood, a house at Coniston, in the English Lake District. Nevertheless, as Brantwood was high in the hills, Ruskin tried experimenting on the land there to find out if he could still help villagers in the Swiss mountains.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

FEBRUARY 25



"Columba, Indica alis viridibus" [common emerald dove] (1749-1776) after George Edwards (1694-1773). Part of the [Thomas Campbell] Eyton Collection.
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

FEBRUARY 26



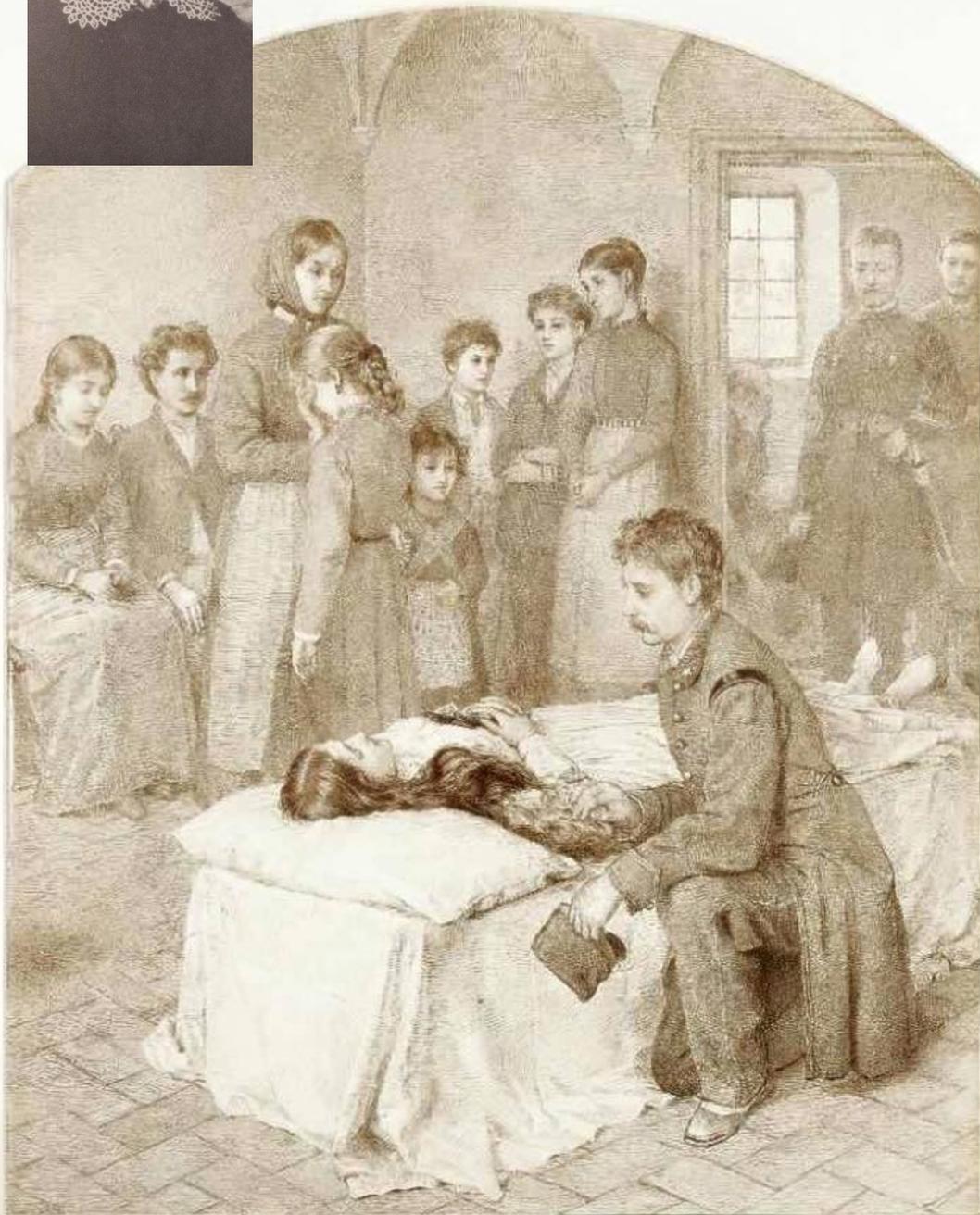
Angelo Alessandri, "The Forum Romanum, Italy" (1881).

Alessandri was sent to paint in Rome by Ruskin during 1881. In particular he wanted Alessandri to make copies of frescoes in the Sistine Chapel by Botticelli and Perugino. He may also have asked for this study in preparation for his book "Our Fathers have Told Us" for which he was writing "Ara Coeli" on the foundations of Christianity and the papacy in Rome. But the book was never completed and Alessandri did not finish this study. Nevertheless, Ruskin wrote that it was "of exquisite truth and beauty." There is another reason that Alessandri may have painted this study. He and Ruskin had a mutual friend, Giacomo Boni, who was responsible for conserving buildings in Venice. At the time Alessandri painted this, he was also supervising an archaeological dig on the Forum, so Alessandri could have been recording this event.

Ruskin disliked classical architecture and rarely spoke admiringly of any buildings in Rome. He also disliked the city itself, finding it dirty and smelly. Ruskin visited Rome less frequently than other major Italian cities and when he was there it was usually to see paintings such as Botticelli's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. On his first visit to Rome, when he was 21, Ruskin wrote in his diary that the Forum was a "very good subject" for a picture, but this seems to be his only complementary remark. He also referred at this time to the Forum as "a good group of smashed columns, just what, if it were got up, as it very easily might be, at Virginia Water [a small town, in Surrey named after the lake in nearby Windsor Great Park], we should call a piece of humbug—the kind of thing that one is sick to death of in 'compositions'".

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

FEBRUARY 27



Parlami parlami bocchin d'amore

On This Day 1837:
Birth of Francesca
Alexander.
"The Colonel's
Leave" (1882-83) a
drawing in
preparation for "The
Roadside Songs of
Tuscany".

"The Roadside
Songs of Tuscany"
is a decorative book
of twenty songs,
collected from the
countryside around
Florence. Alexander
transcribed and
translated the songs,
noted down the
tunes and illustrated
scenes from each
ballad using local
people as models.
Together, she and
John Ruskin used
the book to raise
money for the area's
poorer families.
Alexander also
wanted to preserve a
fast-disappearing
part of the area's
culture. This song
was sung to her by,
in her words,

"Annina Bini, a beautiful woman and sweet singer". It tells of a soldier who is granted leave on hearing his lover is dying. On reaching her village, the soldier hears the church bells tolling, and finds that she is already dead. Saying farewell to her family he laments that he hasn't died with her. The line at the bottom of this illustration reads ',

"Parlami, parlami, bocchin d'amore" [speak to me, speak to me, little mouth of love].
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

FEBRUARY 28



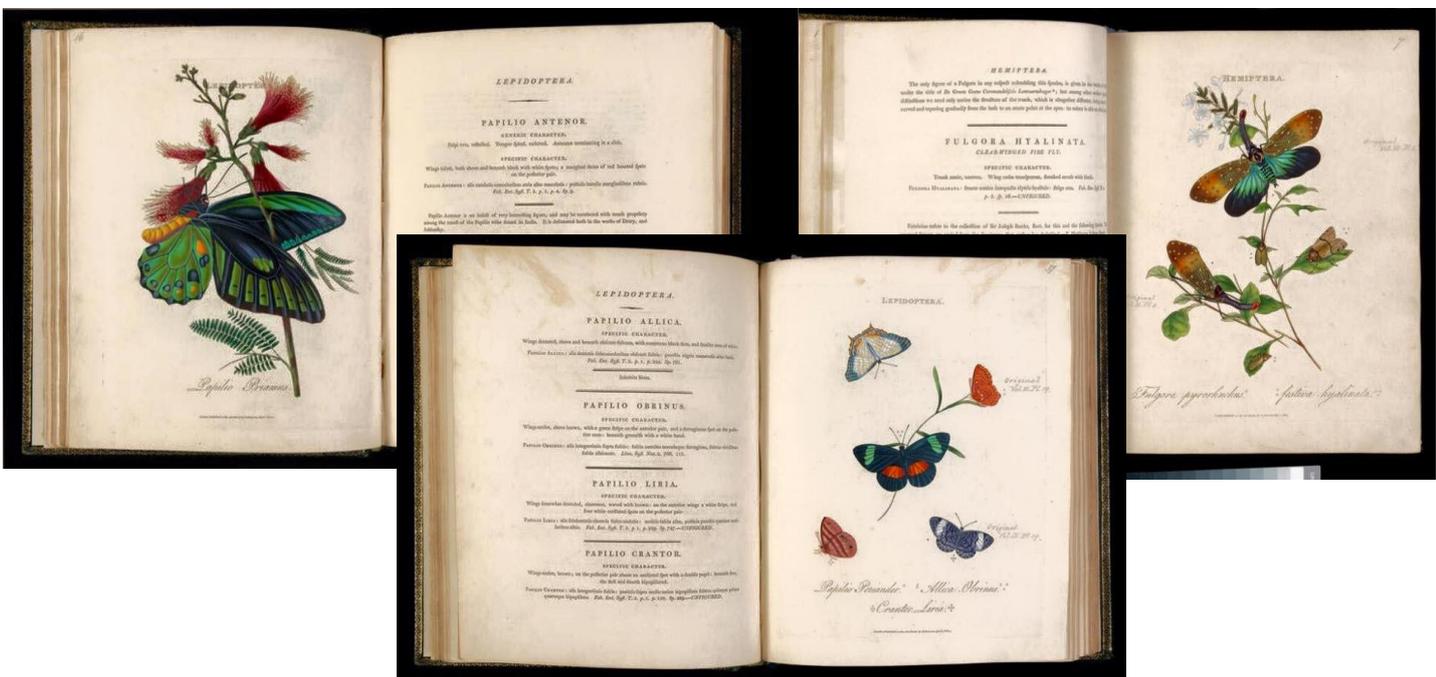
Edward Donovan (1768-1837): "Insects of India" and "Insects of China" (1798-1800).

Although he was born in Ireland, Donovan spent most of his life in London, where he became a collector of natural history specimens. These specimens, which included stuffed and preserved mammals, fish, reptiles and birds, insects, shells, corals and invertebrates, came from all around the world. The collection was so large that in 1807 Donovan opened a museum: The London Museum and Institute of Natural History. Donovan enthusiastically studied his collections and became author and illustrator to a number of highly illustrated and colourful books on natural history, covering botany,

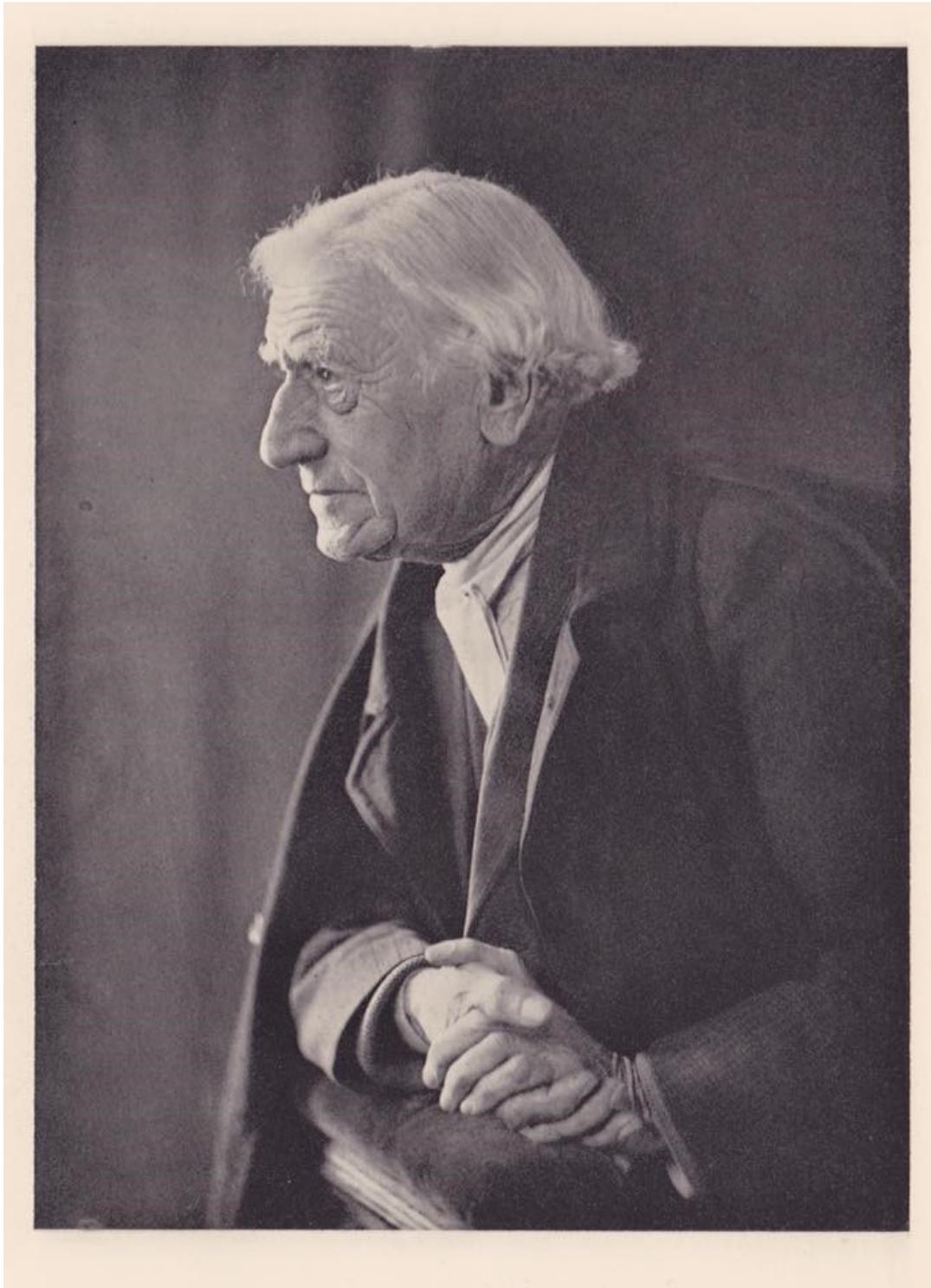
British birds, insects, fish and shells, and insects from Australia, India and China. The insect specimens for these works came from the voyages of Captain Cook.

The great cost of natural history specimens, most of which Donovan bought at auction, and the excessive production costs of the luxurious books that Donovan produced, meant that he, like many other natural-history illustrators, died owing money, but what a legacy he left his admirers.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



On This Day in 1841, Henry Elford Luxmoore was born. Luxmoore met Ruskin at Eton College where Luxmoore taught and Ruskin gave a couple of guest lectures. In 1920, Luxmoore became the Guild's fourth Master. Read about all fourteen Masters on the website (a new page in our Guild Archive section) <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/guild-masters/>



FEBRUARY 29



Frank Randal (1852-1917), "Study of the Panels of the Months, 'January and February', West Façade, Notre Dame, Senlis, France" (1881).
Read online about the Ruskin Collection and download a free PDF of the CALENDAR OF TREASURES FROM THE RUSKIN COLLECTION for January and February: <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>