

TWO UNPUBLISHED RUSKIN LETTERS

The letters in question are among the papers held by King's College School, Wimbledon, the old Junior Department of King's College, London.

The background to these letters is of some interest, both contextually and because of the light it throws on the financial stringency that even well known artists endured in the 1830s and 1840s.

When the Junior Department (referred to subsequently as the School) of King's College, London, began functioning on Oct. 10, 1831, no provision had been made for the teaching of drawing. In 1833,¹ it was decided, however, that "should parents demand it" a drawing master would be appointed. Apparently the parents did demand it, for John Sell Cotman² was elected to the post in 1834.³ It was decided⁴ that his salary should be £100 per annum, with an additional £1 for every pupil over one hundred. This was among the prudent shifts the College Council resorted to, in ensuring that, as far as possible, all appointments to the teaching staff should pay for themselves. Cotman's drawing lessons proved to be very popular, and that great artist enjoyed, for virtually the first time in his life, financial security. Two claims for payment from Cotman in 1834 show that he had over 250 pupils in each term.

Cotman died in 1842, and his post was advertised in the leading newspapers on Dec. 10. As always, the advertisement stipulated that candidates "must be members of the United Church of England and Ireland." King's College, after all, was the Established Church's reply to "the godless foundation" of University College, which laid down no such injunctions.

Among the twenty-two applications received by the end of the year, nine came from artists of sufficient fame to ensure their subsequent inclusion in the Dictionary of National Biography. It is worth listing them as a reminder of how precarious an existence was led by such men at this time.

Augustine Aglio (1777-1857) who painted many interiors, including those of leading London theatres; Francis Arundale (1807-1853) pupil of Augustus Pugin, father of the Gothic architect; Miles Edmund Cotman (1810-1858) eldest son of John Sell Cotman; James Fahey (1804-1885) Secretary of the New Society of Painters in Water-Colours; Edward Hassell (d. 1852) Secretary to the Society of British Artists; John Prescott Knight R.A. (1803-1881), Professor of Perspective to the Royal Academy; George Robert Lewis (1782-1871) illustrator of Dibdin's Continental tour; Thomas Charles Rowbotham (1823-1875) water colour artist,