

John Ruskin

*He who stands at the gate
of the Garden of Eden*



WHO IS IT, THINK YOU, who stands at the gate of this sweeter garden, alone, waiting for you? Did you ever hear, not of a Maud, but a Madeleine, who went down to her garden in the dawn and found One waiting at the gate, whom she supposed to be the gardener?¹ Have you not sought Him often; — sought Him in vain, all through the night; — sought Him in vain at the gate of that old garden where the fiery sword is set?² He is never there; but at the gate of *this* garden He is waiting always — waiting to take your hand — ready to go down to see the fruits of the valley, to see whether the vine has flourished, and the pomegranate budded. There you shall see with Him the little tendrils of the vines that His hand is guiding — there you shall see the pomegranate springing where His hand cast the sanguine seed;³ — more: you shall see the troops of the angel keepers that, with their wings, wave away the hungry birds from the pathsides where He has sown, and call to each other between the vineyard rows, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.”⁴ Oh — you queens — you queens! among the hills and happy greenwood of this land of yours, shall the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; and in your cities, shall the stones cry out against you, that they are the only pillows where the Son of Man can lay His head?⁵



¹ [Quoting *John* xx, 15]

² [Quoting *Genesis* iii, 24]

³ [Quoting *Song of Solomon* vii, 12]

⁴ [*ibid.* ii, 15]

⁵ *Sesame and Lilies*. (3rd ed. of 1871) Lecture II, Lilies – Of Queens’ Gardens, ¶ 95; [quoting *Matthew* viii, 20]