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Quotes by Ruskin, John

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John Ruskin (February 8, 1819 January 20, 1900) was an English author, poet and artist, although more famous for his work as art critic and social critic. Ruskin's thinking on art and architecture became the thinking of the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

One who does not know when to die, does not know how to live.

- Ruskin, John

Tell me what you like and I'll tell you what you are.

- Ruskin, John

Men cannot not live by exchanging articles, but producing them. They live by work not trade.

- Ruskin, John

The child who desires education will be bettered by it; the child who dislikes it disgraced.

- Ruskin, John

Modern education has devoted itself to the teaching of impudence, and then we complain that we can no longer control our mobs.

- Ruskin, John

The first condition of education is being able to put someone to wholesome and meaningful work.

- Ruskin, John

When a man is wrapped up in himself he makes a pretty small package.

- Ruskin, John

Doing is the great thing, for if people resolutely do what is right, they come in time to like doing it.

- Ruskin, John

Out of suffering comes the serious mind; out of salvation, the grateful heart; out of endurance, fortitude; out of deliverance faith.

- Ruskin, John

No human being, however great, or powerful, was ever so free as a fish.

- Ruskin, John

Large fortunes are all founded either on the occupation of land, or lending or the taxation of labor.

- Ruskin, John

Freedom is only granted us that obedience may be more perfect.

- Ruskin, John

Men are more evanescent than pictures, yet one sorrows for lost friends, and pictures are my friends. I have none others. I am never long enough with men to attach myself to them; and whatever feelings of attachment I have are to material things.

- Ruskin, John

You cannot get anything out of nature or from God by gambling; only out of your neighbor.

- Ruskin, John

You may chisel a boy into shape, as you would a rock, or hammer him into it, if he be of a better kind, as you would a piece of bronze. But you cannot hammer a girl into anything.

She grows as a flower does.

- Ruskin, John

Give little love to a child, and you get a great deal back.

- Ruskin, John

Every great man is always being helped by everybody; for his gift is to get good out of all things and all persons.

- Ruskin, John

It is far better to give work that is above a person, than to educate the person to be above their work.

- Ruskin, John

A great thing can only be done by a great person; and they do it without effort.

- Ruskin, John

Life without industry is guilt. Industry without Art is Brutality.

- Ruskin, John

It is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture. That which I have... insisted upon as the life of the whole, that spirit which is given only by the hand and eye of the workman, can never be recalled.

- Ruskin, John

If men lived like men indeed, their houses would be temples -- temples which we should hardly dare to injure, and in which it would make us holy to be permitted to live; and there must be a strange dissolution of natural affection, a strange unthankfulness for all that homes have given and parents taught, a strange consciousness that we have been unfaithful to our fathers honor, or that our own lives are not such as would make our dwellings sacred to our children, when each man would fain build to himself, and build for the little revolution of his own life only.

- Ruskin, John

To make your children capable of honesty is the beginning of education.

- Ruskin, John

Man's only true happiness is to live in hope of something to be won by him. Reverence something to be worshipped by him, and love something to be cherished by him, forever.

- Ruskin, John

The first test of a truly great man is his humility. By humility I don't mean doubt of his powers or hesitation in speaking his opinion, but merely an understanding of the relationship of what he can say and what he can do.

- Ruskin, John

It is eminently a weariable faculty, eminently delicate, and incapable of bearing fatigue; so that if we give it too many objects at a time to employ itself upon, or very grand ones for a long time together, it fails under the effort, becomes jaded, exactly as the limbs do by bodily fatigue, and incapable of answering any farther appeal till it has had rest.

- Ruskin, John

The imagination is never governed, it is always the ruling and divine power.

- Ruskin, John

Imaginary evils soon become real one by indulging our reflections on them.

- Ruskin, John

An unimaginative person can neither be reverent or kind.

- Ruskin, John

Your labor only may be sold, your soul must not.

- Ruskin, John

The great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than the furnace blast, is all in very deed for this -- that we manufacture everything there except men.

- Ruskin, John

An infinitude of tenderness is the chief gift and inheritance of all truly great men.

- Ruskin, John

Once thoroughly our own knowledge ceases to give us pleasure.

- Ruskin, John

It is not, truly speaking, the labor that is divided; but the men: divided into mere segments of men --broken into small fragments and crumbs of life, so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin or the head of a nail.

- Ruskin, John

The secret of language is the secret of sympathy and its full charm is possible only to the gentle.

- Ruskin, John

It takes a great deal of living to get a little deal of learning.

- Ruskin, John

How false is the conception, how frantic the pursuit, of that treacherous phantom which men call Liberty: most treacherous, indeed, of all phantoms; for the feeblest ray of reason might surely show us, that not only its attainment, but its being, was impossible. There is no such thing in the universe. There can never be. The stars have it not; the earth has it not; the sea has it not; and we men have the mockery and semblance of it only for our heaviest punishment.

- Ruskin, John

What do we, as a nation, care about books? How much do you think we spend altogether on our libraries, public or private, as compared with what we spend on our horses?

- Ruskin, John

No lying knight or lying priest ever prospered in any age, but especially not in the dark ones. Men prospered then only in following an openly declared purpose, and preaching candidly beloved and trusted creeds.

- Ruskin, John

It is advisable that a person know at least three things, where they are, where they are going, and what they had best do under the circumstances.

- Ruskin, John

There is no wealth but life.

- Ruskin, John

The anger of a person who is strong, can always bide its time.

- Ruskin, John

No person who is well bred, kind and modest is ever offensively plain; all real deformity means want for manners or of heart.

- Ruskin, John

An architect should live as little in cities as a painter. Send him to our hills, and let him study there what nature understands by a buttress, and what by a dome.

- Ruskin, John

We may live without her, and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her. How cold is all history, how lifeless all imagery, compared to that which the living nation writes, and the uncorrupted marble bears!

- Ruskin, John

No person who is not a great sculptor or painter can be an architect. If he is not a sculptor or painter, he can only be a builder.

- Ruskin, John

No architecture is so haughty as that which is simple.

- Ruskin, John

When we build, let us think that we build for ever.

- Ruskin, John

They are good furniture pictures, unworthy of praise, and undeserving of blame.

- Ruskin, John

It is not how much one makes but to what purpose one spends.

- Ruskin, John

Mountains are to the rest of the body of the earth, what violent muscular action is to the body of man. The muscles and tendons of its anatomy are, in the mountain, brought out with force and convulsive energy, full of expression, passion, and strength.

- Ruskin, John

Music when healthy, is the teacher of perfect order, and when depraved, the teacher of perfect disorder.

- Ruskin, John

Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts -- the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art.

- Ruskin, John

The strength and power of a country depends absolutely on the quantity of good men and women in it.

- Ruskin, John

Of all the things that oppress me, this sense of the evil working of nature herself --my disgust at her barbarity --clumsiness --darkness --bitter mockery of herself --is the most desolating.

- Ruskin, John

The sky is the part of creation in which nature has done for the sake of pleasing man.

- Ruskin, John

Obey something, and you will have a chance to learn what is best to obey. But if you begin by obeying nothing, you will end by obeying the devil and all his invited friends.

- Ruskin, John

In old times men used their powers of painting to show the objects of faith, in later times they use the objects of faith to show their powers of painting.

- Ruskin, John

You may either win your peace or buy it: win it, by resistance to evil; buy it, by compromise with evil.

- Ruskin, John

People are eternally divided into two classes, the believer, builder, and praiser, and the unbeliever, destroyer and critic.

- Ruskin, John

No good work whatever can be perfect, and the demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art.

- Ruskin, John

No good is ever done to society by the pictorial representation of its diseases.

- Ruskin, John

The last act crowns the play.

- Ruskin, John

What distinguishes a great artist from a weak one is first their sensibility and tenderness; second, their imagination, and third, their industry.

- Ruskin, John

I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.

- Ruskin, John

No art can be noble which is incapable of expressing thought, and no art is capable of expressing thought which does not change.

- Ruskin, John

Every increased possession loads us with a new weariness.

- Ruskin, John

In general, pride is at the bottom of all great mistakes.

- Ruskin, John

Punishment is the last and the least effective instrument in the hands of the legislator for the prevention of crime.

- Ruskin, John

What is the cheapest to you now is likely to be the dearest to you in the end.

- Ruskin, John

Whether for life or death, do your own work well.

- Ruskin, John

It is his restraint that is honorable to a person, not their liberty.

- Ruskin, John

Nothing is ever done beautifully which is done in rivalry: or nobly, which is done in pride.

- Ruskin, John

The work of science is to substitute facts for appearances, and demonstrations for impressions.

- Ruskin, John

Let every dawn of the morning be to you as the beginning of life. And let every setting of the sun be to you as its close. Then let everyone of these short lives leave its sure record of some kindly thing done for others; some good strength of knowledge gained for yourself.

- Ruskin, John

It is far more difficult to be simple than to be complicated; far more difficult to sacrifice skill and easy execution in the proper place, than to expand both indiscriminately.

- Ruskin, John

Nearly all the powerful people of this age are unbelievers, the best of them in doubt and misery, the most in plodding hesitation, doing as well as they can, what practical work lies at hand.

- Ruskin, John

Skill is the unified force of experience, intellect and passion in their operation.

- Ruskin, John

The distinguishing sign of slavery is to have a price, and to be bought for it.

- Ruskin, John

Some slaves are scoured to their work by whips, others by their restlessness and ambition.

- Ruskin, John

Spiritual power begins by directing animal power to other than egoistic ends.

- Ruskin, John

Fit yourself for the best society, and then, never enter it.

- Ruskin, John

It does not matter what the whip is; it is none the less a whip, because you have cut thongs for it out of your own souls.

- Ruskin, John

The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.

- Ruskin, John

If a great thing can be done, it can be done easily, but this ease is like the of ease of a tree blossoming after long years of gathering strength.

- Ruskin, John

Success by the laws of competition signifies a victory over others by obtaining the direction and profits of their work. This is the real source of all great riches.

- Ruskin, John

No great intellectual thing was ever done by great effort.

- Ruskin, John

The principle of all successful effort is to try to do not what is absolutely the best, but what is easily within our power, and suited for our temperament and condition.

- Ruskin, John

When love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece.

- Ruskin, John

Nothing can be beautiful which is not true.

- Ruskin, John

Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless; peacocks and lilies, for instance.

- Ruskin, John

A book worth reading is worth buying.

- Ruskin, John

You should read books like you take medicine, by advice, and not by advertisement.

- Ruskin, John

Be sure that you go to the author to get at his meaning, not to find yours.

- Ruskin, John

Books are divided into two classes, the books of the hour and the books of all time.

- Ruskin, John

How long most people would look at the best book before they would give the price of a

large turbot for it?

- Ruskin, John

To use books rightly, is to go to them for help; to appeal to them when our own knowledge and power fail; to be led by them into wider sight and purer conception than our own, and to receive from them the united sentence of the judges and councils of all time, against our solitary and unstable opinions.

- Ruskin, John

People cannot live by lending money to one another.

- Ruskin, John

One of the prevailing sources of misery and crime is in the generally accepted assumption, that because things have been wrong a long time, it is impossible they will ever be right.

- Ruskin, John

They are the weakest-minded and the hardest-hearted men that most love change.

- Ruskin, John

The beginning and almost the end of all good law is that everyone shall work for their bread and receive good bread for their work.

- Ruskin, John

To watch the corn grow, or the blossoms set; to draw hard breath over the plough or spade; to read, to think, to love, to pray, are the things that make men happy.

- Ruskin, John

No one can become rich by the efforts of only their toil, but only by the discovery of some method of taxing the labor of others.

- Ruskin, John

In health of mind and body, men should see with their own eyes, hear and speak without trumpets, walk on their feet, not on wheels, and work and war with their arms, not with engine-beams, nor rifles warranted to kill twenty men at a shot before you can see them.

- Ruskin, John

Men don't and can't live by exchanging articles, but by producing them. They don't live by trade, but by work. Give up that foolish and vain title of Trades Unions; and take that of laborers Unions.

- Ruskin, John

Along the iron veins that traverse the frame of our country, beat and flow the fiery pulses of its exertion, hotter and faster every hour. All vitality is concentrated through those throbbing arteries into the central cities; the country is passed over like a green sea by narrow bridges, and we are thrown back in continually closer crowds on the city gates.

- Ruskin, John

Government and cooperation are in all things the laws of life. Anarchy and competition, the laws of death.

- Ruskin, John

The best thing in life aren't things.

- Ruskin, John

The common practice of keeping up appearances with society is a mere selfish struggle of the vain with the vain.

- Ruskin, John

The higher a man stands, the more the word vulgar becomes unintelligible to him.

- Ruskin, John

What right have you to take the word wealth, which originally meant well-being, and degrade and narrow it by confining it to certain sorts of material objects measured by money.

- Ruskin, John

Summer is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces up, snow is exhilarating; there is no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather.

- Ruskin, John

Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces up, snow is exhilarating; there is no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather.

- Ruskin, John

The best work never was and never will be done for money.

- Ruskin, John

It is excellent discipline for an author to feel that he must say all that he has to say in the fewest possible words, or his readers is sure to skip them.

- Ruskin, John

The distinctive character of a child is to always live in the tangible present.

- Ruskin, John

In great countries, children are always trying to remain children, and the parents want to make them into adults. In vile countries, the children are always wanting to be adults and the parents want to keep them children.

- Ruskin, John

Children see in their parents the past, their parents see in them the future; and if we find more love in the parents for their children than in children for their parents, this is sad but natural. Who does not entertain his hopes more than his recollections.

- Ruskin, John

Nearly all the evils in the Church have arisen from bishops desiring power more than light.

They want authority, not outlook.

- Ruskin, John

The root of almost every schism and heresy from which the Christian Church has suffered, has been because of the effort of men to earn, rather than receive their salvation; and the reason preaching is so commonly ineffective is, that it often calls on people to work for God rather than letting God work through them.

- Ruskin, John

I look upon those pitiful concretions of lime and clay which spring up, in mildewed forwardness, out of the kneaded fields about our capital... not merely with the careless disgust of an offended eye, not merely with sorrow for a desecrated landscape, but with a painful foreboding that the roots of our national greatness must be deeply cankered when they are thus loosely struck in their native ground. The crowded tenements of a struggling and restless population differ only from the tents of the Arab or the Gipsy by their less healthy openness to the air of heaven, and less happy choice of their spot of earth; by their sacrifice of liberty without the gain of rest, and of stability without the luxury of change.

- Ruskin, John

Civilization is the making of civil persons.

- Ruskin, John

The purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love color the most.

- Ruskin, John

Of all God's gifts to the sighted man, color is holiest, the most divine, the most solemn.

- Ruskin, John

A thing is worth what it can do for you, not what you choose to pay for it.

- Ruskin, John

We have seen when the earth had to be prepared for the habitation of man, a veil, as it were, of intermediate being was spread between him and its darkness, in which were joined in a subdued measure, the stability and insensibility of the earth, and the passion and perishing of mankind.

- Ruskin, John

Cursing is invoking the assistance of a spirit to help you inflict suffering. Swearing on the other hand, is invoking, only the witness of a spirit to an statement you wish to make.

- Ruskin, John

God has lent us the earth for our life; it is a great entail. It belongs as much to those who are to come after us, and whose names are already written in the book of creation, as to

us; and we have no right, by anything that we do or neglect, to involve them in unnecessary penalties, or deprive them of benefits which it was in our power to bequeath.

- Ruskin, John

Our duty is to preserve what the past has had to say for itself, and to say for ourselves what shall be true for the future.

- Ruskin, John

Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts, the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others, but of the three the only trustworthy one is the last.

- Ruskin, John



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