

A violin is the central focus, positioned vertically. Behind it, a sheet of aged, yellowed music paper is draped. The background is dark and textured, possibly a wooden surface, with a large, rusted metal bracket or frame at the top. To the left, a small metal ring is visible. Below the violin, there is a small, rectangular piece of paper with some text. At the bottom left, a blue envelope with a red stamp and some handwritten text is partially visible. The overall lighting is dramatic, highlighting the violin and the music paper.

A JOY
FOREVER

JOHN RUSKIN

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John Ruskin

PREFACE TO THE 1880 EDITION.



The title of this book,—or, more accurately, of its subject;—for no author was ever less likely than I have lately become, to hope for perennial pleasure to his readers from what has cost himself the most pains,—will be, perhaps, recognised by some as the last clause of the line chosen from Keats by the good folks of Manchester, to be written in letters of gold on the cornice, or Holy rood, of the great Exhibition which inaugurated the career of so many,—since organized, by both foreign governments and our own, to encourage the production of works of art, which the producing nations, so far from intending to be their "joy for ever," only hope to sell as soon as possible. Yet the motto was chosen with uncomprehended felicity: for there never was, nor can be, any essential beauty possessed by a work of art, which is not based on the conception of its honoured permanence, and local influence, as a part of appointed and precious furniture, either in the cathedral, the house, or the joyful thoroughfare, of nations which enter their gates with thanksgiving, and their courts with praise.

"Their" courts—or "His" courts;—in the mind of such races, the expressions are synonymous: and the habits of life which recognise the delightfulness, confess also the sacredness, of homes nested round the seat of a worship unshaken by insolent theory: themselves founded on an abiding affection for the past, and care for the future; and approached by paths open only to the activities of honesty,

and traversed only by the footsteps of peace.

The exposition of these truths, to which I have given the chief energy of my life, will be found in the following pages first undertaken systematically and in logical sequence; and what I have since written on the political influence of the Arts has been little more than the expansion of these first lectures, in the reprint of which not a sentence is omitted or changed.

The supplementary papers added contain, in briefest form, the aphorisms respecting principles of art-teaching of which the attention I gave to this subject during the continuance of my Professorship at Oxford confirms me in the earnest and contented re-assertion.

John Ruskin,

Brantwood,

April 29th, 1880.

PREFACE TO THE 1857 EDITION.



The greater part of the following treatise remains in the exact form in which it was read at Manchester; but the more familiar passages of it, which were trusted to extempore delivery, have been written with greater explicitness and fulness than I could give them in speaking; and a considerable number of notes are added, to explain the points which could not be sufficiently considered in the time I had at my disposal in the lecture room.

Some apology may be thought due to the reader, for an endeavour to engage his attention on a subject of which no profound study seems compatible with the work in which I am usually employed. But profound study is not, in this case, necessary either to writer or readers, while accurate study, up to a certain point, is necessary for us all. Political economy means, in plain English, nothing more than "citizen's economy"; and its first principles ought, therefore, to be understood by all who mean to take the responsibility of citizens, as those of household economy by all who take the responsibility of householders. Nor are its first principles in the least obscure: they are, many of them, disagreeable in their practical requirements, and people in general pretend that they cannot understand, because they are unwilling to obey them: or rather, by habitual disobedience, destroy their capacity of understanding them. But there is not one of the really great principles of the science which is either obscure or disputable,—which

might not be taught to a youth as soon as he can be trusted with an annual allowance, or to a young lady as soon as she is of age to be taken into counsel by the housekeeper.

I might, with more appearance of justice, be blamed for thinking it necessary to enforce what everybody is supposed to know. But this fault will hardly be found with me, while the commercial events recorded daily in our journals, and still more the explanations attempted to be given of them, show that a large number of our so-called merchants are as ignorant of the nature of money as they are reckless, unjust, and unfortunate in its employment.

The statements of economical principles given in the text, though I know that most, if not all, of them are accepted by existing authorities on the science, are not supported by references, because I have never read any author on political economy, except Adam Smith, twenty years ago. Whenever I have taken up any modern book upon this subject, I have usually found it encumbered with inquiries into accidental or minor commercial results, for the pursuit of which an ordinary reader could have no leisure, and by the complication of which, it seemed to me, the authors themselves had been not unfrequently prevented from seeing to the root of the business.

Finally, if the reader should feel induced to blame me for too sanguine a statement of future possibilities in political practice, let him consider how absurd it would have appeared in the days of Edward I. if the present state of social economy had been then predicted as necessary, or even described as possible. And I believe the advance from the days of Edward I. to our own, great as it is confessedly, consists, not so much in what we have actually accomplished, as in what we are now enabled to conceive.

LECTURE I.



THE DISCOVERY AND APPLICATION OF ART.

A Lecture delivered at Manchester, July 10, 1857.

1. Among the various characteristics of the age in which we live, as compared with other ages of this not yet *very* experienced world, one of the most notable appears to me to be the just and wholesome contempt in which we hold poverty. I repeat, the *just* and *wholesome* contempt; though I see that some of my hearers look surprised at the expression. I assure them, I use it in sincerity; and I should not have ventured to ask you to listen to me this evening, unless I had entertained a profound respect for wealth—true wealth, that is to say; for, of course, we ought to respect neither wealth nor anything else that is false of its kind: and the distinction between real and false wealth is one of the points on which I shall have a few words presently to say to you. But true wealth I hold, as I said, in great honour; and sympathize, for the most part, with that extraordinary feeling of the present age which publicly pays this honour to riches.

2. I cannot, however, help noticing how extraordinary it is, and how this epoch of ours differs from all bygone epochs in having no philosophical nor religious worshippers of the ragged godship of poverty. In the classical ages, not only were there people who voluntarily lived in tubs, and who used gravely to maintain the superiority of tub-life to town-life, but the Greeks and Latins seem to have looked on these eccentric, and I do not scruple to say, absurd people,

with as much respect as we do upon large capitalists and landed proprietors; so that really, in those days, no one could be described as purse proud, but only as empty-purse proud. And no less distinct than the honour which those curious Greek people pay to their conceited poor, is the disrespectful manner in which they speak of the rich; so that one cannot listen long either to them, or to the Roman writers who imitated them, without finding oneself entangled in all sorts of plausible absurdities; hard upon being convinced of the uselessness of collecting that heavy yellow substance which we call gold, and led generally to doubt all the most established maxims of political economy.

3. Nor are matters much better in the Middle Ages. For the Greeks and Romans contented themselves with mocking at rich people, and constructing merry dialogues between Charon and Diogenes or Menippus, in which the ferryman and the cynic rejoiced together as they saw kings and rich men coming down to the shore of Acheron, in lamenting and lamentable crowds, casting their crowns into the dark waters, and searching, sometimes in vain, for the last coin out of all their treasures that could ever be of use to them.

4. But these Pagan views of the matter were indulgent, compared with those which were held in the Middle Ages, when wealth seems to have been looked upon by the best men not only as contemptible, but as criminal. The purse round the neck is, then, one of the principal signs of condemnation in the pictured Inferno; and the Spirit of Poverty is revered with subjection of heart, and faithfulness of affection, like that of a loyal knight for his lady, or a loyal subject for his queen. And truly, it requires some boldness to quit ourselves of these feelings, and to confess their partiality or their error, which, nevertheless, we are certainly bound to do. For wealth is simply one of the greatest powers which can be entrusted to human hands: a power, not indeed to be envied, because it seldom makes us happy; but still less to be abdicated or despised;

while, in these days, and in this country, it has become a power all the more notable, in that the possessions of a rich man are not represented, as they used to be, by wedges of gold or coffers of jewels, but by masses of men variously employed, over whose bodies and minds the wealth, according to its direction, exercises harmful or helpful influence, and becomes, in that alternative, Mammon either of Unrighteousness or of Righteousness.

5. Now, it seemed to me that since, in the name you have given to this great gathering of British pictures, you recognize them as Treasures—that is, I suppose, as part and parcel of the real wealth of the country—you might not be uninterested in tracing certain commercial questions connected with this particular form of wealth. Most persons express themselves as surprised at its quantity; not having known before to what an extent good art had been accumulated in England: and it will, therefore, I should think, be held a worthy subject of consideration, what are the political interests involved in such accumulations, what kind of labour they represent, and how this labour may in general be applied and economized, so as to produce the richest results.

6. Now, you must have patience with me, if in approaching the specialty of this subject, I dwell a little on certain points of general political science already known or established: for though thus, as I believe, established, some which I shall have occasion to rest arguments on are not yet by any means universally accepted; and therefore, though I will not lose time in any detailed defence of them, it is necessary that I should distinctly tell you in what form I receive, and wish to argue from them; and this the more, because there may perhaps be a part of my audience who have not interested themselves in political economy, as it bears on ordinary fields of labour, but may yet wish to hear in what way its principles can be applied to Art. I shall, therefore, take leave to trespass on your patience with a

few elementary statements in the outset, and with the expression of some general principles, here and there, in the course of our particular inquiry.

7. To begin, then, with one of these necessary truisms: all economy, whether of states, households, or individuals, may be defined to be the art of managing labour. The world is so regulated by the laws of Providence, that a man's labour, well applied, is always amply sufficient to provide him during his life with all things needful to him, and not only with those, but with many pleasant objects of luxury; and yet farther, to procure him large intervals of healthful rest and serviceable leisure. And a nation's labour, well applied, is, in like manner, amply sufficient to provide its whole population with good food and comfortable habitation; and not with those only, but with good education besides, and objects of luxury, art treasures, such as these you have around you now. But by those same laws of Nature and Providence, if the labour of the nation or of the individual be misapplied, and much more if it be insufficient,—if the nation or man be indolent and unwise,—suffering and want result, exactly in proportion to the indolence and improvidence—to the refusal of labour, or to the misapplication of it. Wherever you see want, or misery, or degradation, in this world about you, there, be sure, either industry has been wanting, or industry has been in error. It is not accident, it is not Heaven-commanded calamity, it is not the original and inevitable evil of man's nature, which fill your streets with lamentation, and your graves with prey. It is only that, when there should have been providence, there has been waste; when there should have been labour, there has been lasciviousness; and wilfulness, when there should have been subordination. ^[1]

8. Now, we have warped the word "economy" in our English language into a meaning which it has no business whatever to bear. In our use of it, it constantly signifies merely

sparing or saving; economy of money means saving money—economy of time, sparing time, and so on. But that is a wholly barbarous use of the word—barbarous in a double sense, for it is not English, and it is bad Greek; barbarous in a treble sense, for it is not English, it is bad Greek, and it is worse sense. Economy no more means saving money than it means spending money. It means, the administration of a house; its stewardship; spending or saving, that is, whether money or time, or anything else, to the best possible advantage. In the simplest and clearest definition of it, economy, whether public or private, means the wise management of labour; and it means this mainly in three senses: namely, first, *applying* your labour rationally; secondly, *preserving* its produce carefully; lastly, *distributing* its produce seasonably.

9. I say first, applying your labour rationally; that is, so as to obtain the most precious things you can, and the most lasting things, by it: not growing oats in land where you can grow wheat, nor putting fine embroidery on a stuff that will not wear. Secondly, preserving its produce carefully; that is to say, laying up your wheat wisely in storehouses for the time of famine, and keeping your embroidery watchfully from the moth: and lastly, distributing its produce seasonably; that is to say, being able to carry your corn at once to the place where the people are hungry, and your embroideries to the places where they are gay; so fulfilling in all ways the Wise Man's description, whether of the queenly housewife or queenly nation: "She riseth while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry, her clothing is silk and purple. Strength and honour are in her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come."

10. Now, you will observe that in this description of the perfect economist, or mistress of a household, there is a studied expression of the balanced division of her care

between the two great objects of utility and splendour: in her right hand, food and flax, for life and clothing; in her left hand, the purple and the needlework, for honour and for beauty. All perfect housewifery or national economy is known by these two divisions; wherever either is wanting, the economy is imperfect. If the motive of pomp prevails, and the care of the national economist is directed only to the accumulation of gold, and of pictures, and of silk and marble, you know at once that the time must soon come when all these treasures shall be scattered and blasted in national ruin. If, on the contrary, the element of utility prevails, and the nation disdains to occupy itself in any wise with the arts of beauty or delight, not only a certain quantity of its energy calculated for exercise in those arts alone must be entirely wasted, which is bad economy, but also the passions connected with the utilities of property become morbidly strong, and a mean lust of accumulation merely for the sake of accumulation, or even of labour merely for the sake of labour, will banish at last the serenity and the morality of life, as completely, and perhaps more ignobly, than even the lavishness of pride, and the likeness of pleasure. And similarly, and much more visibly, in private and household economy, you may judge always of its perfectness by its fair balance between the use and the pleasure of its possessions. You will see the wise cottager's garden trimly divided between its well-set vegetables, and its fragrant flowers; you will see the good housewife taking pride in her pretty table-cloth, and her glittering shelves, no less than in her well-dressed dish, and her full storeroom; the care in her countenance will alternate with gaiety, and though you will reverence her in her seriousness, you will know her best by her smile.

11. Now, as you will have anticipated, I am going to address you, on this and our succeeding evening, chiefly on the subject of that economy which relates rather to the garden than the farm-yard. I shall ask you to consider with

me the kind of laws by which we shall best distribute the beds of our national garden, and raise in it the sweetest succession of trees pleasant to the sight, and (in no forbidden sense) to be desired to make us wise. But, before proceeding to open this specialty of our subject, let me pause for a few moments to plead with you for the acceptance of that principle of government or authority which must be at the root of all economy, whether for use or for pleasure. I said, a few minutes ago, that a nation's labour, well applied, was amply sufficient to provide its whole population with good food, comfortable clothing, and pleasant luxury. But the good, instant, and constant application is everything. We must not, when our strong hands are thrown out of work, look wildly about for want of something to do with them. If ever we feel that want, it is a sign that all our household is out of order. Fancy a farmer's wife, to whom one or two of her servants should come at twelve o'clock at noon, crying that they had got nothing to do; that they did not know what to do next: and fancy still farther, the said farmer's wife looking hopelessly about her rooms and yard, they being all the while considerably in disorder, not knowing where to set the spare handmaidens to work, and at last complaining bitterly that she had been obliged to give them their dinner for nothing. That's the type of the kind of political economy we practise too often in England. Would you not at once assert of such a mistress that she knew nothing of her duties? and would you not be certain, if the household were rightly managed, the mistress would be only too glad at any moment to have the help of any number of spare hands; that she would know in an instant what to set them to;—in an instant what part of to-morrow's work might be most serviceably forwarded, what part of next month's work most wisely provided for, or what new task of some profitable kind undertaken; and when the evening came, and she dismissed her servants to their recreation or their rest, or gathered them to the