

John Ruskin

John Ruskin was born in London, in 1819. His father was a wealthy wine-merchant, with a fondness for good books, pictures, and travel. Ruskin's mother was a devout woman who brought up her son under a strict home discipline. He was educated by private tuition, and in spite of the fact that he travelled much with his parents, his boyhood seems to have been a rather lonely one. In 1836 he entered Oxford University, but his college course was interrupted by ill-health, and as a result he spent two years in travel and did not graduate until 1842. The following year (1843) he published the first volume of *Modern Painters*, and thenceforward he devoted himself to the study of art. His lectures and essays on literature and art at once brought him into prominence, and he came to be recognized not only as a master of English prose, but as an authority on everything relating to art. In 1869 he was appointed professor of art at Oxford, and during the next ten years delivered many of his finest lectures. In the meantime he had begun to take a deep interest in problems relating to labour and capital, and in his efforts to bring about better conditions among the poorer classes he not only wrote and spoke on subjects relating to wealth and poverty, but actually spent practically his whole fortune in founding institutions which he thought might improve the conditions of the labouring classes. But his efforts were not successful, and the failure of his plans, together with domestic unhappiness and frequent attacks of ill-health, brought discouragement and bitterness with increasing age. In 1879 he left London and retired to Brautwood on Coniston Lake, in the English Lake District. Here he spent the remainder of his life in quiet and seclusion. Finally, in January, 1900, he passed quietly away at the advanced age of eighty-one years, and was buried, according to his own wish, in the churchyard at Coniston.