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Honor the Dead, Be Grateful to the Living

LET us not forget, that if honour be for the dead, gratitude can only be for the living. He who has once stood beside the grave, to look back upon the companionship which has been forever closed, feeling how impotent, there, are the wild love and the keen sorrow, to give an instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart, which can only be discharged to the dust. But the lesson which men receive as individuals, they do not learn as nations. Again and again they have seen their noblest descend into the grave, and have thought it enough to garland the tombstone when they had not crowned the brow, and to pay honour to the ashes which they had denied to the spirit. Let it not displease them that they are bidden, amidst the tumult and the dazzle of their busy life, to listen for the few voices, and watch for the few lamps which God has toned and lighted to charm and to guide them, that they may not learn their sweetness by their silence, nor their light by their decay.

John Ruskin in Modern Painters