

At the present time, when we hear and read so much concerning picturesque beauty, many readers may wish to be informed in what it consists: the publisher, therefore, under obligation to Mr. Gilpin for his 18 lessons, Gilpin's *Essays on Picturesque Beauty, &c.*

on this subject. He tells us, that, by objects of picturesque beauty, he means 'such beautiful objects as are suited to the pencil.' This is clear, and accurately defined; and we hope that the definition will receive attention from those travellers, who, journeying with their pencils in their hands, have scratched down every scene, however uninteresting, and have obtruded their works on the public under the name, as they chuse to call them, of *picturesque tours*. We hope, also, as the meaning of this newly-manufactured word, this *nescimus quem de grege novitiorum*, is thus ascertained, and limited in its application, that future writers who may adopt it will be exact in their use of it; and we trust that Mr. Gilpin himself will not call us cavillers if we ask him, what he would have us understand by 'a picturesque eye;' and whether, by calling himself and his friend, 'we picturesque people,' he intends us to imagine that they are objects proper to be represented on the canvass?—If so, we certainly have no authority to deny that the gentlemen, to whom we mean no offence, are *picturesque*, for we have not the happiness of knowing the person of either.

On the subject of this species of beauty, Mr. Gilpin thus delivers his sentiments, in an address to William Lock*, Esq.

'A published work is certainly a fair object of criticism: but I think, my dear sir, we picturesque people are a little misunderstood with regard to our *general intention*. I have several times been surprized at finding us represented, as supposing, *all beauty to consist in picturesque beauty*—and the face of nature to be examined *only by the rules of painting*. Whereas, in fact, we always speak a different language. We speak of the grand scenes of nature, though uninteresting in a *picturesque light*, as having a strong effect on the imagination—often a stronger, than when they are properly disposed for the pencil. We every where make a distinction between scenes that are *beautiful and amusing*; and scenes that are *picturesque*. We examine, and admire both. Even artificial objects we admire, whether in a grand, or in a humble stile, though unconnected with picturesque beauty—the palace and the cottage—the improved garden scene, and the neat homestead. Works of tillage also afford us equal delight—the plough, the mower, the reaper, the hay-field, and the harvest-wane. In a word, we reverence, and admire the works of God; and look with benevolence, and pleasure, on the works of men.

'In what then do we offend? At the expence of no other species of beauty, we merely endeavour to illustrate, and recommend *one species more*; which, though among the most interesting, hath never yet, so far as I know, been made the set object of investigation. From scenes indeed of the *picturesque kind* we exclude the appendages of tillage, and in general the works of men; which too often introduce preciseness and formality. But excluding artificial

* Of Norbury Park, Surrey.

objects

objects from one species of beauty, is not degrading them from all. We leave then the general admirer of the beauties of nature to his own pursuits; nay we admire them with him: all we desire, is, that he would leave us as quietly in the possession of our amusements.'

Having premised this, the author proceeds in his first essay to mark the distinguishing characteristic of picturesque beauty. In the second, he points out 'the mode of amusement, that may arise from viewing the scenes of nature in a picturesque light.' From this essay, we shall select such a part as may enable our readers, who are not initiated into the mysteries of the *picturesque*, to judge of the employment of its admirers:

'From the *objects* of picturesque travel, we consider its *sources of amusement*—or in what way the mind is gratified by these objects.

'We might begin in moral stile; and consider the objects of nature in a higher light, than merely as amusement. We might observe, that a search after beauty should naturally lead the mind to the great origin of all beauty; to the

first good, first perfect, and first fair.

But though in theory this seems a natural climax, we insist the less upon it; as in fact we have scarce ground to hope, that every admirer of *picturesque beauty*, is an admirer also of the *beauty of virtue*; and that every lover of nature rests, that

Nature is but a name for an *effect*,

Whose *cause* is God.

If however the admirer of nature can turn his amusements to a higher purpose; if its great scenes can inspire him with religious awe; or its tranquil scenes with that complacency of mind, which is so nearly allied to benevolence, it is certainly the better. *Apponai lucro*.—It is so much into the bargain: for we dare not *promise* him more from picturesque travel, than a rational, and agreeable amusement. Yet even this may be of some use in an age teeming with licentious pleasure; and may in this light at least be considered as having a moral tendency.

'The first source of amusement to the picturesque traveller, is the *pursuit* of his object—the expectation of new scenes continually opening, and arising to his view. We suppose the country to have been unexplored. Under this circumstance the mind is kept constantly in an agreeable suspense. The love of novelty is the foundation of this pleasure. Every distant horizon promises something new; and with this pleasing expectation we follow nature through all her walks. We pursue her from hill to dale; and hunt after those various beauties, with which she every where abounds.

'The pleasures of the chase are universal. A hare started before dogs is enough to set a whole country in an uproar. The plough and the spade are deserted. Care is left behind; and every human faculty is dilated with joy.

'And shall we suppose it a greater pleasure to the sportsman to pursue a trivial animal, than it is to the man of taste to pursue the beauties of nature? to follow her through all her recesses? to obtain a sudden glance, as she flits past him in some airy shape? to trace her

through the mazes of the cover? to wind after her along the vale? or along the reaches of the river?

After the pursuit we are gratified with the attainment of the object. Our amusement, on this head, arises from the employment of the mind in examining the beautiful scenes we have found. Sometimes we examine them under the idea of a *whole*: we admire the composition, the colouring, and the light, in one *comprehensive view*. When we are fortunate enough to fall in with scenes of this kind, we are highly delighted. But as we have less frequent opportunities of being thus gratified, we are more commonly employed in analyzing the *parts of scenes*; which may be exquisitely beautiful, though unable to produce a whole. We examine what would amend the composition; how little is wanting to reduce it to the rules of our art; what a trifling circumstance sometimes forms the limit between beauty and deformity. Or we compare the objects before us with other objects of the same kind:—or perhaps we compare them with the imitations of art. From all these operations of the mind results great amusement.

But it is not from this *scientific* employment that we derive our chief pleasure. We are most delighted, when some grand scene, though perhaps of incorrect composition, rising before the eye, strikes us beyond the power of thought—when the *vox faucibus hæret*; and every mental operation is suspended. In this pause of intellect, this *deliquium* of the soul, an enthusiastic sensation of pleasure overpreads it, previous to any examination by the rules of art. The general idea of the scenes makes an impression, before any appeal is made to the judgment. We rather *feel*, than *survey* it.

This high delight is generally indeed produced by the scenes of nature; yet sometimes by artificial objects. Here and there a capital picture will raise these emotions; but oftener the rough sketch of a capital master. This has sometimes an astonishing effect on the mind; giving the imagination an opening into all those glowing ideas which inspired the artist; and which the imagination *only* can translate. In general however the works of art affect us coolly, and allow the eye to criticize at leisure.

Having gained by a minute examination of incidents a complete idea of an object, our next amusement arises from enlarging, and correcting our general stock of ideas. The variety of nature is such, that *new objects*, and new combinations of them, are continually adding something to our fund, and enlarging our collection: while the *same kind of object* occurring frequently, is seen under various shapes; and makes us, if I may so speak, more learned in nature. We get it more by heart. He who has seen only one oak tree, has no complete idea of an oak in general; but he who has examined thousands of oak-trees, must have seen that beautiful plant in all its varieties; and obtains a full and complete idea of it.

From this correct knowledge of objects arises another amusement; that of representing, by a few strokes in a sketch, those ideas, which have made the most impression upon us. A few scratches, like a short-hand scrawl of our own, legible at least to ourselves, will serve to raise in our minds the remembrance of the beauties they humbly represent;

represent; and recall to our memory even the splendid colouring, and force of light, which existed in the real scene. Some naturalists suppose, the act of ruminating, in animals, to be attended with more pleasure, than the act of grosser mastication. It may be so in travelling also. There may be more pleasure in recollecting, and recording, from a few transient lines, the scenes we have admired, than in the present enjoyment of them. If the scenes indeed have *peculiar greatness*, this secondary pleasure cannot be attended with those enthusiastic feelings, which accompanied the real exhibition. But, in general, though it may be a calmer species of pleasure, it is more uniform, and uninterrupted. It flatters us too with the idea of a sort of creation of our own; and it is unalloyed with that fatigue, which is often a considerable abatement to the pleasures of traversing the wild and savage parts of nature.—After we have amused *ourselves* with our sketches, if we can, in any degree, contribute to the amusement of others also, the pleasure is surely so much enhanced.

There is still another amusement arising from the correct knowledge of objects; and that is the power of creating, and representing *scenes of fancy*; which is still more a work of creation, than copying from nature. The imagination becomes a camera obscura, only with this difference, that the camera represents objects as they really are; while the imagination, impressed with the most beautiful scenes, and chastened by rules of art, forms its pictures, not only from the most admirable parts of nature; but in the best taste.

We are, in some degree, also amused by the very visions of fancy itself. Often, when slumber has half-closed the eye, and shut out all the objects of sense, especially after the enjoyment of some splendid scene; the imagination, active, and alert, collects its scattered ideas, transposes, combines, and shifts them into a thousand forms, producing such exquisite scenes, such sublime arrangements, such glow, and harmony of colouring, such brilliant lights, such depth, and clearness of shadow, as equally foil description, and every attempt of artificial colouring.

After having thus pointed out the sources from which the 'picturesque traveller,' as he is called, derives his amusements, Mr. Gilpin, in his third essay, investigates the art of sketching landscape after nature. We here meet with many judicious and useful rules, which deserve the attention of those who wish to attain this elegant and pleasing art.

Concerning the Didactic poem annexed to these essays, Mr. Gilpin thus good-humouredly writes:

Several years ago, I amused myself with writing a few lines in verse on landscape-painting; and afterwards sent them, as a fragment, (for they were not finished,) to amuse a friend*. I had no other purpose. My friend told me, he could not say much for my poetry; but as my *rules*, he thought, were good, he wished me to

* Edward Forster, Esq. of Walthamstow.

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finish my fragment; and if I should not like it as a *poem*, I might turn it into an *essay in prose*.—As this was only what I expected, I was not disappointed; though not encouraged to proceed. So I troubled my head no farther with my verses.

Some time after, another friend*, finding fault with my mode of describing the lakes, and mountains of Cumberland, and Westmorland, as too poetical, I told him the fate of my fragment; lamenting the hardship of my case—when I wrote verse, one friend called it prose; and when I wrote prose, another friend called it verse. In his next letter he desired to see my verses; and being pleased with the subject, he offered, if I would finish my poem, (however carelessly as to metrical exactness,) he would adjust the versification. But he found, he had engaged in a more arduous affair, than he expected. My rules and technical terms were stubborn, and would not easily glide into verse; and I was as stubborn as they, and would not relinquish the scientific part for the poetry. My friend's good-nature therefore generally gave way, and suffered many lines to stand, and many alterations to be made, which his own good taste could not approve. I am afraid therefore I must appear to the world, as having spoiled a good poem; and must shelter myself and it under those learned reasons which have been given for putting *Propria que maribus* and *As in prasenti*, into verse.

With respect to the merits of the poem†, the opinions of the public will probably be similar to those of Mr. Forster and Mr.

* Rev. Mr. Mason.

† As a short specimen of Mr. G.'s poetical talent, we shall here extract his justly merited compliment, in the *introductory* address of his poem, to Mr. Lock:

That art, which gives the practis'd pencil pow'r
To rival nature's graces; to combine

In one harmonious whole her scatter'd charms,
And o'er them sling appropriate force of light,

I sing, unskill'd in numbers; yet a muse,
Led by the hand of friendship, deigns to lend

Her aid, and give that free colloquial flow,
Which best befits the plain preceptive song.

To thee, thus aided, let me dare to sing,
Judicious Lock; who from great nature's realms

Hast cull'd her loveliest features, and arrang'd
In thy rich memory's storehouse: Thou, whose glance,

Practis'd in truth and symmetry, can trace
In every latent touch each master's hand,

Whether the marble by his art subdu'd
Be soften'd into life; or canvas smooth

Be swell'd to animation: thou, to whom
Each mode of landscape, beautiful or sublime,

With every various colour, tint, and light,
Its nice gradations, and its bold effects,

Are all familiar, patient hear my song,

Mr. Mason: those readers, who peruse it for the rules which it contains, will possibly wish that it had been written in prose; while others, who view it as a piece of poetry, will lament that the muse sometimes moves rather ungracefully amid the roughnesses of technical terms and didactic stumbling blocks. The washed prints, or *acqua tintas*, with which this work is embellished, are well adapted to illustrate its rules and principles.

ART. IV. *Geometrical and Graphical Essays*, containing a Description of the Mathematical Instruments used in Geometry, Civil and Military Surveying, Levelling and Perspective, with many new Problems illustrative of each Branch. By George Adams, Mathematical Instrument Maker to His Majesty, and Optician to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. 8vo. pp. 500, and 33 Plates. 13s. boards. Sold by the Author, Fleet-street.

MR. Adams very justly observes, that: 'those who have had much occasion to use the mathematical instruments, constructed to facilitate the arts of drawing, surveying, &c. have long complained that a treatise was wanting to explain their use, describe their adjustments, and give such an idea of their construction, as might enable them to select those which are best adapted to their respective purposes.' M. Bion's treatise, which was translated into English by the late Mr. Stone, and published in 1723, is the only one that has been written on the subject*; and the numerous improvements which have been made in instruments, since that time, have rendered that publication of little use at present. The object of Mr. Adams, in the work before us, is to obviate this complaint; and we think that he has done it with considerable effect.

Mr. Adams begins, very properly, by defining the terms which he must necessarily use. He then states a few of the primary principles on which his work depends; and afterward proceeds to describe the mathematical instruments which are used in drawing. Among these, we find an account of an improved pair of triangular compasses, a small pair of beam compasses with a micrometer, four new parallel-rulers, and several other instruments which had not been hitherto de-

That to thy taste and science nothing new
Presents, yet humbly hopes from thee to gain
The plaudit, which, if nature first approve,
Then, and then only, thou wilt deign to yield.

* Mr. Robertson's book, printed in 1747, and again, with some additions, in 1757, is confined wholly to such instruments as are put into a case, and called drawing instruments.