PICTURESQUE: A FRAGMENT.

IN THE MANNER OF COWPER.

New follies spring; and now we must be taught
To judge of prospects by an artist's rules,
And Picturesque's the word. Whatever scene,
Gay, rich, sublime, stupendous, wide, or wild,
Defies the bounds of canvas, nor supplies
Foreground and background, keeping, lights and shades,
To aid the pencil's power; contracts the brow,
And curls the nose, of Taste's great arbiter,
Too learned far to feel a vulgar joy.

"That fiction flows too much—the boundless length
Of dazzling distance mars the near effect.
You village spire, impos'd in the trees,
Takes from the scene its savage character,
And makes it snarck of man; th' other fleet kine
And well-fed fleeds might grace a country fair,
But tame their outlines, and a heavy mass
Of glaring light gleams from their polish'd sides.
How still that conic hill? Th' o'er chalky cliffs
Ruth forward on the sight, and harshly break
All harmony of keeping! 'tis as bad
As country parson's white-beplastered front!"

Such the grave doctrines of the modern sage,
The Prefect-Critic, when, with half-shut eye,
And hand-formed tube, he squints at Nature's works,
And takes them piece by piece; with six-inch square
Motes out the vast horizon; culls, rejects,

Lights up, obscures, and blots the blessed sun.
And is it thus the handmaid Art presumes
To rule her mistress? thus would she confine
The Maker's hand to suit the copyist's skill?

In Nature all is fair—or, if ungrac'd
With flowing form and harmony of hues,
Yet by the force of some associate charm,
Some touch sublime, or contrast's magic power,
It awes, expanda, delights, or melts the soul.

I love to see the lonely mountain start
Bold from the plain, whose huge tho' shapeless bulk
Shrinks Egypt's pyramids to pigmy toys:
I love the piny forest, many a mile
Blackening th' horizon, tho' a dreary moor
Fill up the space between; I joy to stand

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On the bare ridge's utmost verge, air-propt,
And with an eagle's ken the vale below,
With all its fields, groves, farms, and winding rills,
At once drink in: still more my transport swells,
If sudden on my waking eye
Bufts the wide ocean, tho' the dazzling blaze
Of noon-tide sun reflected from his waves.

Confound all space in undistinguished light.

Celestial glory, hail! my ravished soul
Inhales the bright effulgence, feels how weak
Art's feeble hand to imitate thy fires,
And clothe her colours in thy radiant vest.

But O! that once my longing eyes might view
The sky-toppt Alps their fiery pinnacles
Build in mid air; or Norway's ragged cliffs
With fir befting'd!—what tho' their forms grotesque,
With lines abrupt and perpendicular, pain

Th' those tender optics that demand repose
On beauty's waving line; yet rather far
I'd fill my fancy from those mighty stores
Of vast ideas, graving on my brain
The forms gigantic of those sons of earth,
Than own whatever Claude and Poussin drew.

Meanwhile my eye not undelighted roams
O'er flower-embroider'd meads, whose level length,
The left'ning alders, dimly-gliding falls,
And sprinkled groups of cattle, faintly mark.
For all that painting gives I would not change
The heart-expanding view, when Autumn's hand
Wide o'er the champagnie pours a billowy sea
Of yellow corn, o'er spreading hill and dale,
While from its isles of verdure scatter'd round,
Emerging hamlets lapt in plenty smile.

Nor does my sight disdain the rural box
Of ruddy brick or plaster, neat and snug,
With polifades before, and walls behind,
And chear-trimm'd hedges, for the garden's bound.
The lines, indeed, are stiff, and glaring tints
Refuse to blend, and not a tatter'd roof
Or mouldering stone affords one single touch
Of Picturesque; but happy man dwells here,
With peace, and competence, and sweet repose,
And bliss domestic; these the mental eye
Suffice to charm, and all it sees is good.

* The author is by no means indefensible to the fond of genuine taste, as well as the uncommon powers of description, profusely by the admired writer have alluded to; but he thinks he clearly discerns, that a habit of looking at nature merely with a reference to its affording objects for the pencil, has at times, given a falsification to his feelings, and led him away from the perception of those beauties of a superior order which charm the simpler hearts of the country. If this has at all been the effect upon the accomplished members of the Picturesque School, what must it be upon many of his disciples, the vulgar herd of imitators?