

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

RIVER WYE,

AND SEVERAL PARTS OF

SOUTH WALES, &c.

RELATIVE CHIEFLY TO

PICTURESQUE BEAUTY;

M A D E

In the Summer of the Year 1770,

SECOND EDITION,

By WILLIAM GILPIN, M. A.
PREBENDARY OF SALISBURY; AND
VICAR OF BOLDRE IN NEW FOREST, NEAR LYMINGTON.

16 / L O N D O N ;

PRINTED FOR R. BLAMIRE, IN THE STRAND.

M.DCC.LXXXIX.

S. c. F.



T O T H E

Rev. WILLIAM MASON.

*Vicar's Hill,
November 20, 1782.*

DEAR SIR,

THE very favourable manner, in which you spoke * of some observations I shewed you in MS. several years ago, *On the lakes, and mountains of the northern parts of England*, induced many of my friends, at different times, to desire the publication of them. But as they are illustrated by a great variety of plans, and drawings, the hazard and expence had rather a formidable appearance.

* See Gray's memoirs, p. 377.

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Your

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Your advice against a subscription, I have considered; and am convinced, on weighing the matter, that without ascertaining a little better the difficulties of printing so complicated a work, I should find myself embarrassed by an *engagement with the public*; and should infallibly injure either my subscribers on one hand; or myself on the other.

I have followed your advice, you see, also in another point; and have made an essay in a smaller work of the same kind; which may enable me the better to ascertain the expences of a larger.

I have chosen the following little piece for that purpose; which was the first of the kind I ever amused myself with; and as it is very unimportant in itself, you will excuse my endeavouring to give it some little credit by the following anecdote.

In

In the same year, in which this journey was made, your late valuable friend Mr. Gray † made it likewise; and hearing that I had put on paper a few remarks on the scenes, which he had so lately visited, he desired a sight of them. They were then only in a rude state; but the handsome things he said

† Mr. Gray's own account of this tour is contained in a letter, dated the 24th of May, 1771.

“ My last summer's tour was through Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, and Shropshire, five of the most beautiful counties in the kingdom. The very principal light, and capital feature of my journey, was the river Wye, which I descended in a boat for near 40 miles from Ross to Chepstow. Its banks are a succession of nameless beauties. One, out of many, you may see not ill-described by Mr. Whately, in his observations on gardening, under the name of the New-Weir. He has also touched on two others, Tintern-abbey, and Persfield; both of them famous scenes; and both on the Wye. Monmouth, a town I never heard mentioned, lies on the same river; in a vale, that is the delight of my eyes, and the very seat of pleasure. The vale of Abergavenny, Ragland, and Chepstow-castles, Ludlow, Malvern-hills, &c. were the rest of my acquisitions; and no bad harvest in my opinion: but I made no journal myself; else you should have had it. I have indeed a short one, written by the companion of my travels, Mr. Nicholls, that serves to recall, and fix the fleeting images of these things.”

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of them to a friend ‡ of his, who obligingly repeated them to me, gave them, I own, some little degree of credit in my own opinion; and make me somewhat less apprehensive in risking them before the public.

If this little work afforded any amusement to Mr. Gray, it was the amusement of a very late period of his life. He saw it in London, about the beginning of June 1771; and he died, you know, at the end of the July following.

Had he lived, it is possible, he might have been induced to have assisted me with a few of his own remarks on scenes, which he had so accurately examined. The slightest touches of such a master would have had their effect. No man was a greater admirer of nature, than Mr. Gray; nor admired it with better taste.

‡ William Frazer Esq; under-secretary of state.

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I can only however offer this little work to the public, as a hasty sketch. To criticize the face of a country correctly, you should see it oftener than once; and in various seasons. Different circumstances make such changes in the same landscape, as give it wholly a new aspect. But these scenes are marked just as they struck the eye at first. I had not an opportunity to repeat the view.

For the drawings I must apologize in the same manner. They were hastily sketched; and under many disadvantages; and pretend at best to give only a general idea of a place, or scene, without entering into the details of portrait.

Such as the work is, I print it by your advice; and it is chiefly from my deference to your opinion, and that of my other friends,

that my expectation of any favour from the public is derived. I am, dear sir, with great regard, and esteem,

Your most obedient,
and very sincere
humble servant,
WILLIAM GILPIN.

POSTSCRIPT to the second edition.

In the first edition of this work, the drawings were executed in a style between etching with a needle, and aquatinta. In this edition, the latter mode only is employed. They are all executed by one hand, a very ingenious artist*, who has done them I think, full justice. Many of the drawings he has much improved.

I do not myself thoroughly understand the process of working in aquatinta; but the great inconvenience of it seems to arise from it's

* Mr. Jukes, in Howland Street.

not

not being sufficiently under the artist's command. It is not always able to give that just gradation of light and shade, which he desires. Harsh edges will sometimes appear. It is however a very beautiful mode of multiplying drawings; and certainly comes the nearest of any mode we know, to the softness of the pencil. It may indeed literally be called *drawing*; as it washes in the shades. The only difference is, that it is a more unmanageable process to wash the shades upon copper with aquafortis, than upon paper with a brush. If however the aquatinta mode of multiplying drawings hath some inconveniences, it is no more than every other mode of working on copper is subject to. Engraving particularly is always accompanied with a degree of stiffness.

For myself, I am fond of the free, rough stile of etching landscape with a needle, after the manner of Rembrandt; in which much is left to the imagination to make out. But this would not satisfy the public; nor indeed

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any one, whose imagination is not so conversant with the scenes of nature, as to make out a landscape from a hint.—This rough mode hath at least the advantage of biting the copper more strongly; and giving a greater number of good impressions.

To the fifteen drawings of the first edition I was advised to add two, as explanatory of the folding of the side-screens of a circumscribed river*. The first of these drawings is meant to illustrate these screens in their simplest form, when each consists only of one part. The second illustrates the variation of them, when each consists of two parts, or more.

To the observations also of the first edition, a few are added; particularly the intire sixth section; and a fuller description of the vale of Severn in the first.

* See page 21.

C O N T E N T S.

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GENERAL PURPOSES of travelling
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rich-

rich-castle—remarks on natural composition
—Rure-dean church—Stone-quarries, and
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SECT.

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S E C T. XII. p. 139.

Road to Bristol—remarks on strong tinting—Bristol—hot-wells—country between Bristol and Bath—Bath—Chippenham—Marlborough—Marlborough-downs—road to Newberry—Donnington-castle—remarks on painting imaginary objects.

T R A N S L A T I O N

O F

L A T I N Q U O T A T I O N S.

- Page 38. **O**N the left of the river stood a lofty rock, as if hewn from the quarry, hanging over the precipice, haunted by birds of prey.
- 59. Perhaps you may introduce some trifling plant: but does this compensate for want of unity, and simplicity in a whole?
- 77. Every man is at liberty to fill his glass to the height, he chuses.
- 78. Glasses unequally filled.
- 100. Countries, which have never known the plough, are my delight—wild woods, and rivers wandering through artless vales.

Page 131. At first, when the vessel pushing from the shore, appeared surrounded by water, all was terror. The trembling animals urging each other on both sides from it, occasioned at first some confusion: but their fears subsiding gradually, from the familiarity of the object, tranquillity took place.

- 149. A scene of wild brushwood.
- 149. Even then the awful genius of the place held the trembling rustic in awe. Even then he entered those gloomy woods with superstitious fear. Some God, no doubt (tho what God, is uncertain) inhabits those sacred groves. The Arcadians often think they see Jove himself, flashing his lightning from the clouds, when the luring storm comes forward over the lofty woods.

E R R A T A.

Page 37. For *three times as far*, read *three*.

- 77. For *at the close of a beautiful approach*, read *at the close of a well-conducted approach*.
- 133. For *disengaging their hinder ledgs*, read *disengaging their hinder legs*.

O B S E R V A T I O N S

O N T H E

R I V E R W Y E, &c.

S E C T I O N I.

WE travel for various purposes—to explore the culture of soils—to view the curiosities of art—to survey the beauties of nature—and to learn the manners of men; their different politics, and modes of life.

The following little work proposes a new object of pursuit; that of examining the face of a country *by the rules of picturesque beauty*:

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opening

opening the sources of those pleasures, which are derived from the comparison.

Observations of this kind, through the vehicle of description, have the better chance of being founded in truth; as they are not the offspring of theory; but are taken immediately from the scenes of nature, as they arise.

Crossing Hounslow-heath, from Kingston, in Surry, we struck into the Reading-road; and turned a little aside, to see the approach to Caversham-house, which winds about a mile, along a valley, through the park. This was the work of Brown; whose great merit lay in pursuing the path, which nature had marked out. Nothing can be easier, than the sweep; nor better united than the ground; nor more ornamental, than several of the clumps: but many of the single trees, which are beeches, are heavy, and offend the eye. Almost any ordinary tree may contribute to form a group. Its deformities are lost in a crowd: nay, even the deformities of one tree may be corrected by the deformities of another. But few trees have those characters of beauty, which

which will enable them to appear with advantage as individuals*.

From lord Cadogan's we took the Wallingford-road to Oxford. It affords some variety, running along the declivity of a range of hills; and overlooking one of the vallies of the Thames. But there is nothing very interesting in these scenes. The Thames appears; but only in short reaches. It rarely exceeds the dimensions of a pool; and does not once, as I remember, exhibit those ample sweeps, in which the beauty of a river so much consists. The woods too are frequent but they are formal copies: and white spots, bursting every where from a chalky soil, disturb the eye.

From Wallingford to Oxford, we did not observe one good view, except at Shillingford; where the bridge, the river, and its woody banks exhibit some scenery.

* This approach to Caversham-house, I have been informed, is now much injured.

From Oxford we proposed to take the nearest road to Rofs. As far as Witney, the country appears flat, tho in fact it rises. About the eleventh stone the high grounds command a noble semicircular distance on the left; and near Burford there are views of the same kind, on the right; but not so extensive. None of these landscapes however are perfect, as they want the accompaniments of fore-grounds.

At Mr. Lenthal's, in Burford, we admired a capital picture of the family of the Mores, which is said to be Holbein's; and appeared to us intirely in that master's style. But Mr. Walpole thinks it is not an original; and says he found a date upon it, subsequent to the death of that master. It is however a good picture of it's kind. It contains eleven figures—Sir Thomas More, and his father; two young ladies, and other branches of the family. The heads are as expressive, as the composition is formal. The judge is marked with the character of a dry, facetious, sensible, old

old man. The chancellor is handed down to us in history, both as a chearful philosopher; and as a severe inquisitor. His countenance here has much of that eagerness, and stern attention, which remind us of the latter. The subject of this piece seems to be a dispute between the two young ladies; and alludes probably to some well-known family story.

Indeed every family-picture should be founded on some little story, or domestic incident, which, in a degree, should engage the attention of all the figures. It would be invidious perhaps to tax Vandyck on this head; but if the truth might be spoken, I could mention some of his family pictures, which, if the sweetness of his colouring, and the elegant simplicity of his airs, and attitudes, did not make us forget all faults, would appear only like so many distinct portraits, stuck together on the same canvas. It would be equally invidious to omit mentioning a modern master, now at the head of his profession*, whose great fertility of invention in *employing*

* Sir Joshua Reynolds.

the figures of his family-pictures, is not among the least of his many excellences.

The country from Burford is high, and downy. A valley, on the right, kept pace with us; through which flows the Windrush; not indeed an object of sight; but easily traced along the meadows by pollard-willows, and a more luxuriant vegetation.

At Barrington we had a pleasing view, through an opening on the foreground.

About North-leach the road grows very disagreeable. Nothing appears, but downs on each side; and these often divided by stone walls, the most offensive separation of property.

From the neighbourhood of London, we had now pursued our journey through a tract of country, almost uniformly rising, tho by imperceptible degrees, into the heart of Gloucestershire

tershire, till at length we found ourselves on the ridge of Cotswold.

The county of Gloucester is divided into three capital parts—the Wolds, or high downy grounds towards the east—the vale of Severn in the middle—and the forest of Dean, towards the west. The first of these tracts of country we had been traversing from our entrance into Gloucestershire: and the ridge we now stood on, made the extremity of it. Here the heights which we had been ascending by such imperceptible degrees, that we hardly ever perceived the ascent; at length broke down abruptly into the lower grounds; and a vast stretch of distant country appeared at once before the eye.

I know not that I was ever more struck with the singularity, and grandeur of any landscape. Nature generally brings different countries together in some easy mode of connection. If she raise the grounds on one side by a long ascent, she commonly unites them with the country on the other, in the same easy manner. Such scenes we view without wonder, or emotion. We glide without observation, from the near grounds into the more distant. All is gradual, and easy. But when nature works in the bold, and singular stile of composition,

in which she works here—when she raises a country through a progress of a hundred miles ; and then breaks it down at once by an abrupt precipice into an expansive vale, we are immediately struck with the novelty, and grandeur of the scene.

It was the vale of Severn, which was spread before us. Perhaps no where in England a distance so rich, and at the same time so extensive, can be found. We had a view of it almost from one end to the other ; winding through the space of many leagues in a direction nearly from west to north. The eye was lost in the profusion of objects, which were thrown at once before it ; and ran wild, as it were, over the vast expanse, with rapture, and astonishment, before it could compose itself enough to make any coherent observations.—At length we begin to examine the detail ; and to separate the vast immensity before us into parts.

To the north, we looked up the vale, along the course of the Severn. The town of Cheltenham lay below our feet, at the distance of two or three miles. The vale appeared afterwards confined between the limits of Breton hills, on the right ; and those of Malvern on the left. Right between these in the middle

dle of the vale lies Tewksbury, bosomed in wood ; the great church even at this distance makes a respectable appearance. A little to the right, but in distance very remote, we may see the towers of Worcester, if the day be clear ; especially if some accidental gleam of light relieve them from the hills of Shropshire, which close the scene.

To the west, we look toward Gloucester. And here it is remarkable, that as the objects in the northern part of the vale are confined by the hills of Malvern, and Breton, so in this view the vale is confined by two other hills ; which tho' inconsiderable in themselves, give a character to the scene ; and the more so as they are both insulated. One of these hills is known by the name of Robin's-wood ; the other by that of Church-down, from the singularity of a church seated on it's eminence. Between these hills the great object of the vale, is the city of Gloucester ; which appears rising over rich woody scenes. Beyond Gloucester the eye still pursues the vale into remote distance, till it unite with a range of mountains.

Still more to the west arises a distant forest-view, composed of the woods of the country uniting

uniting with the forest of Dean. Of this view the principal feature is the mouth of the Severn, where it first begins to assume a character of grandeur by mixing with the ocean. A small portion only of it is seen stretching in an acute angle over the wood. But the eye, used to perspective, seeing such a body of water, small as it appears, wearing any *determined form* at such distance, gives it credit for its full magnitude. The Welch mountains also, which rise beyond the Severn, contribute to raise the idea: for by forming an even horizontal line along the edge of the water, they give it the appearance of what it really is, an arm of the sea.

Having thus taken a view of the vast expanse of the vale of Severn from the extremity of the descent of Cotswold; we had leisure next to examine the grandeur of the descent itself; which forms a foreground not less admirable than the distance. The lofty ridge, on which we stood, is of great extent; stretching beyond the bounds of Gloucestershire, both towards the north, and towards the south. It is not every where, we may suppose, of equal

equal beauty, height, and abruptness: but fine passages of landscape, I have been told, abound in every part of it. The spot where we took this view, over the vale of Severn, is the high ground on Crickly-hill; which is a promontory standing out in the vale; between the villages of Leckhampton, and Birdlip. Here the descent consists of various rocky knolls, prominences, and abruptnesses; among which a variety of roads wind down the steep towards different parts of the vale; and each of these roads, through its whole varying progress, exhibits some beautiful view; discovering the vale either in whole, or in part, with every advantage of a picturesque foreground.

Many of these precipices also are finely wooded. Some of the largest trees in the kingdom perhaps are to be seen in these parts. The Cheltenham oak, and an elm, not far from it, are trees, which curious travellers always inquire after.

Many of these hills, which inclose the vale of Severn, on this side, furnish landscapes themselves, without borrowing assistance from the vale. The woody vallies, which run winding among them, present many pleasing pastoral

toral scenes. The cloathing country about Stroud, is particularly diversified in this way: tho many of these vallies are greatly injured in a picturesque light, by becoming scenes of habitation, and industry. A cottage, a mill, or a hamlet among trees, may often add beauty to a rural scene: but when houses are scattered through every part, the moral sense can never make a convert of the picturesque eye. Stroud-water valley especially, which is one of the most beautiful of these scenes, has been deformed lately not only by a number of buildings, but by a canal, cut through the middle of it.

Among the curiosities of these high grounds, is the seven-well-head of the Thames. In a glen near the road, a few limpid springs, gushing from a rock, give origin to this noblest of English rivers; tho I suppose several little streams, in that district, might claim the honour with equal justice, if they could bring over opinion.

Nothing can give a stronger idea of the nature of the country I have been describing, than this circumstance of it's giving rise to the Thames. On one side, within half a dozen miles below the precipice, the Severn
has

has arrived at so much consequence, as to take it's level from the tides of the ocean: on the other, the Thames arising at our feet, does not arrive at that dignity, till it have performed a course of two hundred and fifty miles.

Having descended the heights of Crickley, the road, through the vale continues so level to Gloucester, that we scarce saw the town, till we entered it.

The cathedral is of elegant Gothic on the outside, but of heavy Saxon within: that is, these different modes of architecture *prevail most* in these different parts of the building. But in fact, the cathedral of Gloucester is a compound of all the several modes, which have prevailed from the days of Henry the second to those of Henry the seventh, and may be said to include, in one part or other, the whole history of sacred architecture during that period. Many parts of it have been built in the times of the purest Gothic: and others, which have been originally Saxon, appear plainly to have been altered into the Gothic; which was no uncommon practice.

A Gre-

A Grecian screen is injudiciously introduced to separate the choir. The cloisters are light and airy.

As we leave the gates of Gloucester, the view is pleasing. A long stretch of meadow, filled with cattle, spreads into a foreground. Beyond, is a screen of wood, terminated by distant mountains; among which Malvern-hills make a respectable appearance. The road to Ross, leads through a country, woody, rough, hilly, and picturesque.

Ross stands high, and commands many distant views; but that from the church-yard is the most admired; and is indeed very amusing. It consists of an easy sweep of the Wye; and of an extensive country beyond it. But it is not picturesque. It is marked by no characteristic objects: it is broken into too many parts; and it is seen from too high a point. The spire of the church, which is the man of Ross's *heaven-directed spire*, tapers beautifully. The inn, which was the
house

house he lived in, is known by the name of the *man of Ross's house*.

At Ross, we planned our voyage down the Wye to Monmouth; and provided a covered-boat, navigated by three men. Less strength would have carried us down; but the labour is in rowing back.

S E C T. II.

THE WYE takes it's rise near the summit of Plinlimmon; and dividing the counties of Radnor, and Brecknoc, passes through the middle of Herefordshire. From thence becoming a second boundary between Monmouth, and Gloucestershire, it falls into the Severn, a little below Chepstow. To this place from Ross, which is a course of near forty miles, it flows in a gentle, uninterrupted stream; and adorns, through it's various reaches, a succession of the most picturesque scenes.

The beauty of these scenes arises chiefly from two circumstances—the *lofty banks* of the river, and it's *mazy course*; both which are accurately observed by the poet, when he describes the Wye, as *ecchoing* through it's
 C *winding*

winding bounds*. It could not well *eccho*, unless it's banks were both *lofty* and *winding*.

From these two circumstances the views it exhibits, are of the most beautiful kind of perspective; free from the formality of lines.

Every view on a river, thus circumstanced, is composed of four grand parts; the *area*, which is the river itself; the *two side-screens*, which are the opposite banks, and mark the perspective; and the *front-screen*, which points out the winding of the river.

If the Wye ran, like a Dutch canal, between parallel banks there could be no front-screen: the two side-screens, in that situation, would lengthen to a point.

If a road were under the circumstance of a river winding like the Wye, the effect would be the same. But this is rarely the case. The road pursues the irregularity of the country. It climbs the hill; and sinks into the

* Pleas'd Vaga echoes thro' it's winding bounds,
And rapid Severn hoarse applause refounds.

Pope's Eth. Ep.
valley:

valley: and this irregularity gives the view it exhibits, a different character.

The views on the Wye, tho composed only of these *simple parts*, are yet *infinitely varied*.

They are varied, first, by the *contrast of the screens*. Sometimes one of the side-screens is elevated; sometimes the other; and sometimes the front. Or both the side-screens may be lofty; and the front either high, or low.

Again, they are varied by the *folding of the side-screens over each other*; and hiding more or less of the front. When none of the front is discovered, the folding-side either winds round, like an amphitheatre*; or it becomes a long reach of perspective.

* The word *amphitheatre*, strictly speaking, is a complete inclosure: but, I believe, it is commonly accepted, as here, for any circular piece of architecture, tho it do not wind *entirely* round.

These *simple* variations admit still farther variety from becoming *complex*. One of the sides may be compounded of various parts; while the other remains simple: or both may be compounded; and the front simple: or the front alone may be compounded.

Besides these sources of variety, there are other circumstances, which, under the name of *ornaments*, still farther increase them. *Plain* banks will admit all the variations we have yet mentioned: but when this *plainness* is *adorned*, a thousand other varieties arise.

The *ornaments* of the Wye may be ranged under four heads—*ground—wood—rocks—and buildings*.

The *ground*, of which the banks of the Wye consist, (and which hath thus far been considered only in its *general effect*,) affords every variety, which ground is capable of receiving; from the steepest precipice, to the flattest meadow. This variety appears in the
line





line formed by the summits of the banks; in the swellings, and excavations of their declivities; and in the unequal surfaces of the lower grounds.

In many places also the ground is *broken*; which adds new sources of variety. By *broken ground*, we mean only such ground, as hath lost its turf, and discovers the naked soil. Often you see a gravelly earth shivering from the hills, in the form of water-falls: or perhaps you see dry, stony channels, guttering down precipices; the rough beds of temporary torrents: and sometimes so trifling a cause, as the rubbing of sheep against the sides of little banks, or hillocks, will often occasion very beautiful breaks.

The *colour* too of the broken soil is a great source of variety, the yellow, or the red oker; the ashy grey; the black earth; or the marley blue. And the intermixtures of these with each other, and with patches of verdure, blooming heath, and other vegetable tints, fill increase that variety.

Nor let the fastidious reader think, these remarks descend too much into detail. Were an extensive distance described, a forest-scene, a sea coast view, a vast semicircular range of

mountains, or some other grand display of nature, it would be trifling to mark these minute circumstances. But here the hills around exhibit little, except *foregrounds*; and it is necessary, where we have no distances, to be more exact in finishing objects at hand.

The next great ornament on the banks of the Wye, are it's *woods*. In this country there are many works carried on by fire; and the woods being maintained for their use, are periodically cut down. As the larger trees are generally left, a kind of alternacy takes place: what is, this year, a thicket; may, the next, be an open grove. The woods themselves possess little beauty, and less grandeur; yet, when we consider them as the *ornamental*, not as the *essential* parts, of a scene; the eye must not examine them with exactness; but compound for a *general effect*.

One circumstance, attending this alternacy, is pleasing. Many of the furnaces, on the banks of the river, consume charcoal, which is manufactured on the spot; and the smoke, which is frequently seen issuing from the sides of the hills; and spreading it's thin veil over
a part

a part of them, beautifully breaks their lines, and unites them with the sky.

The chief deficiency, in point of wood, is of large trees on the *edge of the water*; which, clumped here and there, would diversify the hills, as the eye passes them; and remove that heaviness, which always, in some degree, (tho here as little as any where) arises from the continuity of ground. They would also give a degree of distance to the more removed parts; which in a scene like this, would be attended with peculiar advantage: for as we have here so little distance, we wish to make the most of what we have.—But trees *immediately on the foreground* cannot be suffered in these scenes; as they would obstruct the navigation of the river.

The *rocks*, which are continually starting through the woods, produce another *ornament* on the banks of the Wye. The rock, as all other objects, tho more than all, receives it's chief beauty from contrast. Some objects, are beautiful in themselves. The eye is pleased with the tuftings of a tree: it is amused with pursuing the eddying stream; or it rests with
C 4 delight

delight on the shattered arches of a Gothic ruin. Such objects, independent of composition, are beautiful in themselves. But the rock, bleak, naked, and unadorned, seems scarcely to deserve a place among them. Tint it with mosses, and lichens of various hues, and you give it a degree of beauty. Adorn it with shrubs and hanging herbage, and you still make it more picturesque. Connect it with wood, and water, and broken ground; and you make it in the highest degree interesting. It's *colour*, and it's *form* are so accommodating, that it generally blends into one of the most beautiful appendages of landscape.

Different kinds of rocks have different degrees of beauty. Those on the Wye, which are of a greyish colour, are in general, simple, and grand; rarely formal, or fantastic. Sometimes they project in those beautiful square masses, yet broken and shattered in every line, which is characteristic of the most majestic species of rock. Sometimes they slant obliquely from the eye in shelving diagonal strata: and sometimes they appear in large masses of smooth stone, detached from each other, and half buried in the soil. Rocks
of

of this last kind are the most lumpish, and the least picturesque.

The various *buildings*, which arise every where on the banks of the Wye, form the last of it's *ornaments*; abbeyes, castles, villages, spires, forges, mills, and bridges. One or other of these venerable vestiges of past, or cheerful habitations of present times, characterize almost every scene.

These *works of art* are however of much greater use in *artificial*, than in *natural* landscape. In pursuing the beauties of nature, we range at large among forests, lakes, rocks, and mountains. The various scenes we meet with, furnish an inexhausted source of pleasure. And tho the works of art may often give animation and contrast to these scenes; yet still they are not necessary. We can be amused without them. But when we introduce a scene on canvas—when the eye is to be confined within the frame of a picture, and can no longer range among the varieties of nature; the aids of art become more necessary; and we want the castle, or the
abbey,

abbey, to give consequence to the scene. Indeed the landscape-painter seldom thinks his view perfect, without characterizing it by some object of this kind.

S E C T. III.

HAVING thus analyzed the Wye, and considered separately its constituent parts—the *steepness* of its banks—its *mazy course*—the *ground, woods, and rocks*, which are its native ornaments—and the *buildings*, which still farther adorn its natural beauties; we shall now take a view of some of those delightful scenes, which result from the *combination* of all these picturesque materials.

I must however premise, how ill-qualified I am to do justice to the banks of the Wye, were it only from having seen them under the circumstance of a continued rain; which began early in the day, before one third of our voyage was performed.

It

It is true, scenery *at hand* suffers less under such a circumstance, than scenery *at a distance*; which it totally obscures.

The picturesque eye also, in quest of beauty, finds it almost in every incident, and under every appearance of nature. Her works, and all her works, must ever, in some degree, be beautiful. Even the rain gave a gloomy grandeur to many of the scenes; and by throwing a veil of obscurity over the removed banks of the river, introduced, now and then, something like a pleasing distance. Yet still it hid greater beauties; and we could not help regretting the loss of those broad lights, and deep shadows, which would have given so much lustre to the whole; and which, ground like this, is, in a peculiar manner, adapted to receive.

The first part of the river from Ross, is tame. The banks are low; and there is scarce an object worth attention, except the ruins of *Wilton-castle*, which appear on the left, shrouded with a few trees. But the scene wants accompaniments to give it grandeur.

The



The bank however soon began to swell on the right, and was richly adorned with wood. We admired it much; and also the vivid images reflected from the water; which were continually disturbed, as we sailed past them; and thrown into tremulous confusion, by the dashing of our oars. A disturbed surface of water endeavouring to collect it's scattered images; and restore them to order, is among the *pretty* appearances of nature.

We met with nothing, for some time, during our voyage, but these grand woody banks, one rising behind another; appearing, and vanishing, by turns, as we doubled the several capes. But tho no particular objects marked and characterized these different scenes; yet they afforded great variety of beautiful perspective views, as we wound round them; or stretched through the reaches, which they marked along the river.

The channel of no river can be more decisively marked, than that of the Wye. *Who bath*

had divided a water-course for the flowing of rivers? saith the Almighty in that grand apostrophe to Job on the works of creation. The idea is happily illustrated here. A nobler *water-course* was never *divided* for any river, than this of the Wye. Rivers, in general, pursue a devious course along the countries, through which they flow; and form channels for themselves by constant fluxion. But sometimes, as in these scenes, we see a channel marked with such precision; that it appears as if originally intended only for the bed of a river.

After sailing four miles from Ross, we came to *Goodrich-castle*; where a grand view presented itself; and we rested on our oars to examine it. A reach of the river, forming a noble bay, is spread before the eye. The bank, on the right, is steep, and covered with wood; beyond which a bold promontory shoots out, crowned with a castle, rising among trees.

This view, which is one of the grandest on the river, I should not scruple to call



correctly picturesque; which is seldom the character of a purely natural scene.

Nature is always great in design. She is an admirable colourist also; and harmonizes tints with infinite variety, and beauty. But she is seldom so correct in composition, as to produce an harmonious whole. Either the foreground, or the background, is disproportioned: or some awkward line runs across the piece: or a tree is ill-placed: or a bank is formal: or something or other is not exactly what it should be. The case is, the immensity of nature is beyond human comprehension. She works on a *vast scale*; and, no doubt, harmoniously, if her schemes could be comprehended. The artist, in the mean time, is confined to a *span*; and lays down his little rules, which he calls the *principles of picturesque beauty*, merely to adapt such diminutive parts of nature's surfaces to his own eye, as come within it's scope.

Hence therefore, the painter, who adheres strictly to the *composition* of nature, will rarely make a good picture. His picture must contain *a whole*: his archetype is but *a part*.

In general however he may obtain views of such parts of nature, as with the addition
of

of a few trees ; or a little alteration in the foreground, (which is a liberty, that must always be allowed) may be adapted to his rules ; though he is rarely so fortunate as to find a landscape completely satisfactory to him. In the scenery indeed at Goodrich-castle the parts are few ; and the whole is a very simple exhibition. The complex scenes of nature are generally those, which the artist finds most refractory to his rules of composition.

In following the course of the Wye, which makes here one of its boldest sweeps, we were carried almost round the castle, surveying it in a variety of forms. Many of these retrospects are good ; but, in general, the castle loses, on this side, both its own dignity, and the dignity of its situation.

The views *from* the castle, were mentioned to us, as worth examining : but the rain was now set in, and would not permit us to land.

As we leave *Goodrich-castle*, the banks, on the left, which had hitherto contributed less
to

to entertain us, began now principally to attract our attention ; rearing themselves gradually into grand steeps ; sometimes covered with thick woods ; and sometimes forming vast concave slopes of mere verdure ; unadorned, except here and there, by a straggling tree : while the flocks, which hung browsing upon them, seen from the bottom, were diminished into white specks.

The view at *Rure-dean-church* unfolds itself next ; which is a scene of great grandeur. Here, both sides of the river are steep, and both woody ; but in one the woods are intermixed with rocks. The deep umbrage of the forest of Dean occupies the front ; and the spire of the church rises among the trees. The reach of the river, which exhibits this scene, is long ; and, of course, the view, which is a noble piece of natural perspective, continues some time before the eye : but when the spire comes directly in front, the grandeur of the landscape is gone.

D

The

The *stone-quarries*, on the right, from which the bridge of Bristol was built; and, on the left, the furnaces of *Bishop's-wood*, vary the scene, tho they are objects of no great importance in themselves.

For some time, both sides of the river continue steep and beautiful. No particular object indeed characterizes either: but here nature characterizes her own scenes. We admire the infinite *variety*, with which she *scapes*, and *adorns*, these vast concave, and convex forms. We admire also that *varied touch*, with which she expresses every object.

Here we see one great distinction between *her* painting, and that of all her *copyists*. Artists universally are *mannerists* in a certain degree. Each has his particular mode of forming particular objects. His rocks, his trees, his figures are cast in one mould: at least they possess only a *varied sameness*. Ruben's figures are all full-fed: Salvator's, spare, and long-legged.

The

The artist also discovers as little variety in filling up the surfaces of bodies, as he does in delineating their forms. You see the same *touch*, or something like it, universally prevail; tho applied to different subjects.

In every part of painting except execution, an artist may be assisted by the labours of those, who have gone before him. He may improve his skill in composition—in light and shade—in perspective—in grace and elegance; that is, in all the scientific parts of his art: but with regard to *execution*, he must set up on his own stock. A *mannerist*, I fear, he must be. If he get a manner of his own, he *may* be an agreeable mannerist: but if he copy another's, he *will certainly* be a formal one. The more closely he copies nature, the better chance he has of being free from this general defect.

At *Lidbroke* is a large wharf, where coals are shipped for Hereford, and other places. Here the scene is new, and pleasing. All has thus far been grandeur, and tranquillity. It is now life, and bustle. A road runs diagonally along the bank; and horses, and carts

D 2

appear

appear passing to the small vessels, which lie against the wharf, to receive their burdens. Close behind, a rich, woody hill hangs sloping over the wharf, and forms a grand background to the whole. The contrast of all this business, the engines used in lading, and unloading, together with the solemnity of the scene, produce all together a picturesque assemblage. The sloping hill is the front-screen; the two side-screens are low.

The front soon becomes a lofty side-screen on the left; and sweeping round the eye at *Welsb-Bicknor*, forms a noble amphitheatre.

At *Cold-well*, the front-screen first appears as a woody hill, swelling to a point. In a few minutes, it changes its shape, and the woody hill becomes a lofty side-screen, on the right; while the front unfolds itself into a majestic piece of rock-scenery.

Here we should have gone on shore, and walked to the *New-Weir*, which by land is only

only a mile; though by water, I believe, it is three times as far. This walk would have afforded us, we were informed, some very noble river-views: Nor should we have lost any thing by relinquishing the water; which in this part was uninteresting.

The whole of this information we should probably have found true; if the weather had permitted us to have profited by it. The latter part of it was certainly well-founded: for the water-views, in this part, were very tame. We left the rocks, and precipices behind; exchanging them for low-banks, and sedges.

But the grand scenery soon returned. We approached it however gradually. The views at *White-church* were an introduction to it. Here we sailed through a long reach of hills; whose sloping sides were covered with large, lumpish, detached stones; which seemed, in a course of years, to have rolled from a girdle of rocks, that surrounds the upper regions of these high grounds on both sides of the river; but particularly on the left.

From these rocks we soon approached the *New-Weir*; which may be called the second grand scene on the Wye.

The river is wider, than usual, in this part; and takes a sweep round a towering promontory of rock; which forms the side-screen on the left; and is the grand feature of the view. It is not a broad, fractured face of rock; but rather a woody hill, from which large projections, in two or three places, burst out; rudely hung with twisting branches, and shaggy furniture; which, like mane round the lion's head, give a more savage air to these wild exhibitions of nature. Near the top a pointed fragment of solitary rock, rising above the rest, has rather a fantastic appearance: but it is not without its effect in marking the scene.

A great master in landscape has adorned an imaginary view with a circumstance exactly similar:

Stabat acuta flex, præcis undiq; faxis,
 — dorso infurgens, altissima visu,
 Dirarum nidis domus opportuna volucrum,
 — prona jugo, lævum incumbibat ad amnem*.

* Æn. VIII. 233.



On the right side of the river, the bank forms a woody amphitheatre, following the course of the stream round the promontory. Its lower skirts are adorned with a hamlet; in the midst of which, volumes of thick smoke, thrown up at intervals, from an iron-forge, as its fires receive fresh fuel, add double grandeur to the scene.

But what peculiarly marks this view, is a circumstance on the water. The whole river, at this place, makes a precipitate fall; of no great height indeed; but enough to merit the title of a cascade: tho' to the eye above the stream, it is an object of no consequence. In all the scenes we had yet passed, the water moving with a flow, and solemn pace, the objects around kept time, as it were, with it; and every steep, and every rock, which hung over the river, was solemn, tranquil, and majestic. But here, the violence of the stream, and the roaring of the waters, impressed a new character on the scene: all was agitation, and uproar; and every steep, and every rock stared with wildness, and terror.

A fishing-boat is used in this part of the river, which is curious. It is constructed of waxed canvas, stretched over a few slight ribs; and holds only a single man. It is called a *coricle*; and is derived probably, as its name imports, from the ancient boat, which was formed of *leather*.

An adventurous fellow, for a wager, once navigated a *coricle* as far as the isle of Lundy, at the mouth of the Bristol-channel. A full fortnight, or more, he spent in this dangerous voyage; and it was happy for him, that it was a fortnight of serene weather. Many a current, and many an eddy; many a flowing tide, and many an ebbing one, afforded him occasion to exert all his skill, and dexterity. Sometimes his little bark was carried far to leeward; and sometimes as far to windward: but still he recovered his course; persevered in his undertaking; and at length happily achieved it. When he returned to the *New-Weir*, report says, the account of his expedition was received like a voyage round the world.

Below

Below the *New-Weir* are other rocky views of the same kind, though less beautiful. But description flags in running over such a monotony of terms. *High, low, steep, woody, rocky*, and a few others, are all the colours of language we have, to describe scenes; in which there are infinite gradations; and, amidst some general sameness, infinite peculiarities.

After we had passed a few of these scenes, the hills gradually descend into Monmouth; which lies too low to make any appearance from the water: but on landing, we found it a pleasant town, and neatly built. The town-house, and church, are both handsome.

The transmutations of time are often ludicrous. Monmouth-castle was formerly the palace of a king; and birth-place of a mighty prince: it is now converted into a yard for fattening ducks.

The sun had set before we arrived at Monmouth. Here we met our chaise: but, on enquiry,

enquiry, finding a voyage more likely to produce amusement, than a journey, we made a new agreement with our bargemen; and embarked again, the next morning.

S E C T. IV.

AS we left Monmouth, the banks, on the left, were, at first, low; but on both sides they soon grew steep, and woody; varying their shapes, as they had done the day before. The most beautiful of these scenes is in the neighbourhood of St. Breval's castle; where the vast, woody declivities, on each hand, are uncommonly magnificent. The castle is at too great a distance to make any object in the view.

The weather was now serene: the sun shone; and we saw enough of the effect of light, in the exhibitions of this day, to regret the want of it the day before.

During

During the whole course of our voyage from Ross, we had scarce seen one corn-field. The banks of the Wye consist, almost entirely either of wood, or of pasturage; which I mention as a circumstance of peculiar value in landscape. Furrowed-lands, and waving-corn, however charming in pastoral poetry, are ill-accommodated to painting. The painter never desires the hand of art to touch his grounds.—But if art *must* stray among them—if it *must* mark out the limits of property, and turn them to the uses of agriculture; he wishes, that these limits may, as much as possible, be concealed; and that the lands they circumscribe, may approach, as nearly as may be, to nature—that is, that they may be pasturage. Pasturage not only presents an agreeable surface: but the cattle, which graze it, add great variety, and animation to the scene.

The meadows, below Monmouth, which ran shelving from the hills to the water-side, were particularly beautiful, and well-inhabited. Flocks of sheep were every where hanging on their green steeps; and herds of cattle occupying the lower grounds. We often failed past groups of them laving their sides in the
water:

water: or retiring from the heat under sheltered banks.

In this part of the river also, which now begins to widen, we were often entertained with light vessels gliding past us. Their white sails passing along the sides of woodland hills were very picturesque.

In many places also the views were varied by the prospect of bays, and harbours in miniature; where little barks lay moored, taking in ore, and other commodities from the mountains. These vessels, designed plainly for rougher water, than they at present incountred, shewed us, without any geographical knowledge, that we approached the sea.

From Monmouth we reached, by a late breakfast-hour, the noble ruin of *Tintern-abbey*; which belongs to the Duke of Beaufort; and is esteemed, with its appendages, the most beautiful and picturesque view on the river.

Castles,

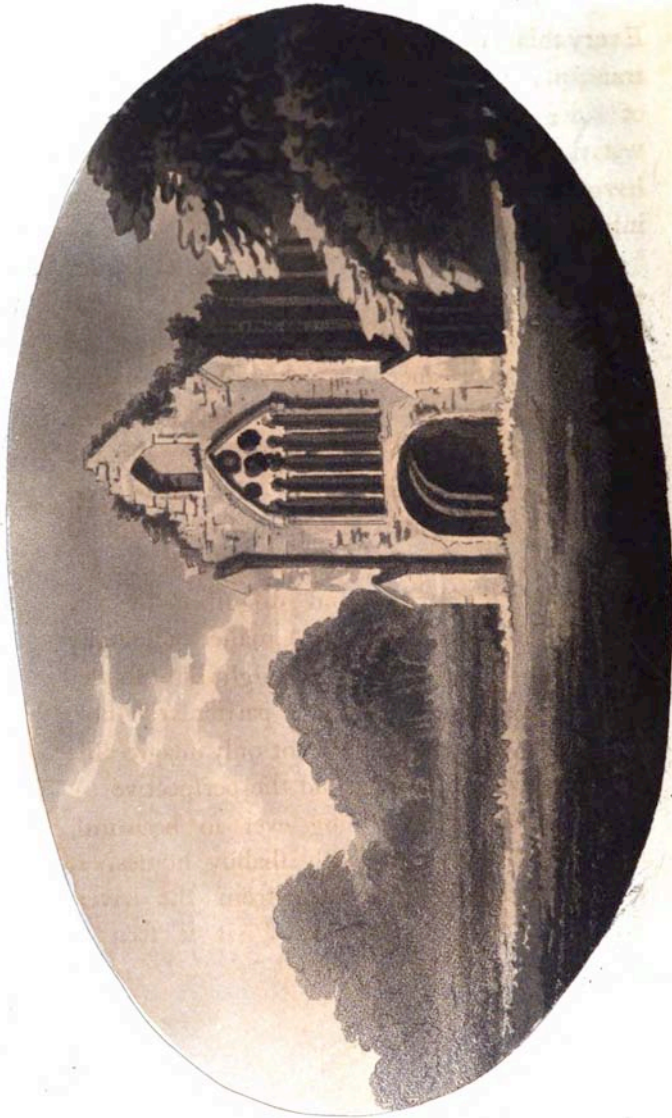


Castles, and abbeys have different situations, agreeable to their respective uses. The castle, meant for defence, stands boldly on the hill; the abbey, intended for meditation, is hid in the sequestered vale.

*Ah! happy thou, if one superior rock
Bear on it's brow, the shivered fragment huge
Of some old Norman fortrefs: happier far,
Ah then most happy, if thy vale below
Wash, with the crystal coolness of it's rills,
Some mould'ring abbey's ivy-vested wall.*

Such is the situation of *Tintern-abbey*. It occupies a gentle eminence in the middle of a circular valley, beautifully screened on all sides by woody hills; through which the river winds it's course; and the hills, closing on it's entrance, and on it's exit, leave no room for inclement blasts to enter. A more pleasing retreat could not easily be found. The woods, and glades intermixed; the winding of the river; the variety of the ground; the splendid ruin, contrasted with the objects of nature; and the elegant line formed by the summits of the hills, which include the whole; make all together a very enchanting piece of scenery.

Every



Every thing around breathes an air so calm, and tranquil; so sequestered from the commerce of life; that it is easy to conceive, a man of warm imagination, in monkish times, might have been allured by such a scene to become an inhabitant of it.

No part of the ruins of Tintern is seen from the river, except the abbey-church. It has been an elegant Gothic pile; but it does not make that appearance as a *distant* object, which we expected. Tho the parts are beautiful, the whole is ill-shaped. No ruins of the tower are left, which might give form, and contrast to the buttresses, and walls. Instead of this, a number of gabel-ends hurt the eye with their regularity; and disgust it by the vulgarity of their shape. A mallet judiciously used (but who durst use it?) might be of service in fracturing some of them; particularly those of the cross isles, which are not only disagreeable in themselves, but confound the perspective.

But were the building ever so beautiful, incompassed as it is with shabby houses, it could make no appearance from the river. From a stand near the road, it is seen to more advantage.

But

But if *Tintern-abbey* be less striking as a *distant* object, it exhibits, on a *nearer* view, (when the whole together cannot be seen, but the eye settles on some of its nobler parts,) a very enchanting piece of ruin. Nature has now made it her own. Time has worn off all traces of the rule: it has blunted the sharp edges of the chissel; and broken the regularity of opposing parts. The figured ornaments of the east-window are gone; those of the west-window are left. Most of the other windows, with their principal ornaments, remain.

To these were superadded the ornaments of time. Ivy, in masses uncommonly large, had taken possession of many parts of the wall; and given a happy contrast to the grey-coloured stone, of which the building is composed. Nor was this undecorated. Mosses of various hues, with lichens, maiden-hair, penny-leaf, and other humble plants, had over-spread the surface; or hung from every joint, and crevice. Some of them were in flower, others only in leaf; but all together gave those full-blown tints, which add the richest finishing to a ruin.

Such is the beautiful appearance, which *Tintern-abbey* exhibits on the *outside* in those parts,

parts, where we can obtain a near view of it. But when we *enter it*, we see it in most perfection: at least, if we consider it as an independent object, unconnected with landscape. The roof is gone: but the walls, and pillars, and abutments, which supported it, are entire. A few of the pillars indeed have given way; and here and there, a piece of the facing of the wall: but in correspondent parts, one always remains to tell the story. The pavement is obliterated: the elevation of the choir is no longer visible: the whole area is reduced to one level; cleared of rubbish; and covered with neat turf, closely shorn; and interrupted with nothing, but the noble columns, which formed the isles, and supported the tower.

When we stood at one end of this awful piece of ruin; and surveyed the whole in one view—the elements of air, and earth, its only covering, and pavement; and the grand, and venerable remains, which terminated both—perfect enough to form the perspective; yet broken enough to destroy the regularity; the eye was above measure delighted with the beauty, the greatness, and the novelty of the scene. More *picturesque* it certainly would have been, if the area, unadorned, had been

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left with all its rough fragments of ruin scattered round; and bold was the hand that removed them: yet as the outside of the ruin, which is the chief object of *picturesque curiosity*, is still left in all its wild, and native rudeness; we excuse—perhaps we approve—the neatness, that is introduced within. It *may* add to the *beauty* of the scene—to its *novelty* it undoubtedly *does*.

Among other things in this scene of desolation, the poverty and wretchedness of the inhabitants were remarkable. They occupy little huts, raised among the ruins of the monastery; and seem to have no employment, but begging: as if a place, once devoted to indolence, could never again become the seat of industry. As we left the abbey, we found the whole hamlet at the gate, either openly soliciting alms; or covertly, under the pretence of carrying us to some part of the ruins, which each could shew; and which was far superior to any thing, which could be shewn by any one else. The most lucrative occasion could not have excited more jealousy, and contention.

One

One poor woman we followed, who had engaged to shew us the monk's library. She could scarce crawl; shuffling along her palsied limbs, and meagre, contracted body, by the help of two sticks. She led us, through an old gate, into a place overspread with nettles, and briars; and pointing to the remnant of a shattered cloister, told us, that was the place. It was her own mansion. All indeed she meant to tell us, was the story of her own wretchedness; and all she had to shew us, was her own miserable habitation. We did not expect to be interested: but we found we were. I never saw so loathsome a human dwelling. It was a cavity, loftily vaulted, between two ruined walls; which streamed with various-coloured stains of unwholesome dews. The floor was earth; yielding, through moisture, to the tread. Not the merest utensil, or furniture of any kind appeared, but a wretched bedstead, spread with a few rags, and drawn into the middle of the cell, to prevent its receiving the damp, which trickled down the walls. At one end was an aperture; which served just to let in light enough to discover the wretchedness within.—When we stood in the midst of this cell of misery;

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and

and felt the chilling damps, which struck us in every direction, we were rather surpris'd, that the wretched inhabitant was still alive; than that she had only lost the use of her limbs.

The country about *Tintern-abbey* hath been described as a solitary, tranquil scene: but it's immediate environs only are meant. Within half a mile of it are carried on great iron-works; which introduce noise and bustle into these regions of tranquillity.

The ground, about these works, appears from the river to consist of grand woody hills, sweeping, and intersecting each other, in elegant lines. They are a continuation of the same kind of landscape, as that about *Tintern-abbey*; and are fully equal to it.

As we still descend the river, the same scenery continues. The banks are equally steep, winding, and woody; and in some parts diversified by prominent rocks, and ground finely broken, and adorned.

But

But one great disadvantage began here to invade us. Hitherto the river had been clear, and splendid; reflecting the several objects on it's banks. But it's waters now became ouzy, and discoloured. Sludgy shores too appeared, on each side; and other symptoms, which discovered the influence of a tide.