

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,
 Disdains the bounds of canvas, nor supplies
 Fore-ground and back-ground, 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 station shows too much—the boundless length

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" Of dazzling distance mars the near effect.
 " Yon village spire, imbosom'd in the trees,
 " Takes from the scene its savage character,
 " And makes it smack of man; and those sleek kine
 " And well-fed steeds might grace a country fair,
 " But tame their outlines, and a heavy mass
 " Of glaring light gleams from their polish'd sides.
 " How stiff that conic hill? Those chalky cliffs
 " Rush forward on the sight, and harshly break
 " All harmony of keeping! 'tis as bad
 " As country parson's white-beplaster'd front!"

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

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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, expands, 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 easy-turning eye
 Bursts the wide ocean, tho' the dazzling blaze
 Of noon-tide sun reflected from his waves
 Confound all space in undistinguish'd light.
 Celestial glory, hail! my ravish'd soul
 Imbibes 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-topt Alps their spiry pinnacles
 Build in mid air; or Norway's ragged cliffs
 With fir besfring'd!—what tho' their forms grotesque,
 With lines abrupt and perpendicular, pain

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 slower-embroider'd meads, whose level length,
 The less'ning alders, dimly-gliding sails,
 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 champaign 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 palisades before, and walls behind,
 And sheer-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* fees is good*.

* The author is by no means insensible to the fund of genuine taste, as well as the uncommon powers of description, possessed by the admired writer here 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 fastidiousness to his feelings, and led him away from the perception of those beauties of a superior order which charm the simpler lover of the country. If this has at all been the effect upon the accomplished *master* of the picturesque school, what must be that upon many of his disciples, the vulgar herd of imitators?