A POEM

ON THE

LANDSCAPES OF GREAT-BRITAIN,

DEDICATED TO

JAMES IRVINE, ESQ.

AT ROME,

BY

GEORGE CUMBERLAND.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1780.

NOR FAME I SLIGHT, NOR FOR HER FAVOURS CALL;
SHE COMES UNLOOK'D FOR; IF SHE COMES AT ALL.

POPE'S TEMPLE OF FAME, VER. 511.

WITH ETCHINGS BY THE AUTHOR.

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M DCC XCVIII.
DEDICATION.

TO

JAMES IRVINE, ESQ.

THE following Poem, having been literally written from a desire to encourage your former studies, cannot, with propriety, be dedicated to any other person.

As this trifle came genuine from the heart, and under the hand of oppression, uttered a sort of prediction of that which afterwards unexpectedly happened to its Author; with the like uncertainty he gives it to the Public, whose applause can add little to his happiness, whose neglect can take little away; sure only of one advantage from it, that it enables him to boast of the friendship of an honest and unprejudiced man.

G. CUMBERLAND.

Bishopsgate, Windsor Park.
A POEM
ON THE
LANDSCAPES OF GREAT-BRITAIN.

PART I.

PROMPTED by friendship's undiminish'd fire,
I wake, with willing hand, th' obedient lyre.

B

An
An infant muse, as yet untutor'd, sighs
To sing our native fields, our native skies;
Left you, my friend, amid the charms of Rome,
Neglecting traits peculiar to your home,
Sink in the sameness of Campania's waste,
The polish'd dictates of a former taste.
And, as a father, when his hope explores,
In search of future honours, distant shores,
In the youth's breast to keep, his only care,
The moral virtues, early planted there,
With tales of old integrity, inspires
To deeds of worth, and fans his virtuous fires;
I, no less partial to that noble art,
Which knows each changing season to impart,
Seek, by presenting pictures to your view,
That former lov'd employment to renew;
Which
Which sweetly o'er the vacant fancy stole,
When Wilson's matchless canvas warm'd your soul;
Such as compos'd the subject of our talk,
When, side by side, we trod the social walk.

With differing landscapes different tastes accord,
This loves the wood, and that the open sward;
Or spacious fields of gently rising down,
Or those whose surface yellow harvests crown;
Where fruitful Ceres cloath'd in plenty reigns,
And fleecy droves are seen, and shepherd swains;
Where oft the jolly hunters wake the morn,
With cheerful notes, and wind the echoing horn;
With jocund found their mingling voices rise,
And thund'ring o'er the glebe, the courser flies;
Sidelong the sturdy ploughman views the chase,
Turning a stubborn foil, with steady pace;
Their speed nor lights his eye, nor warms his breast,
His business labour; and his pleasure rest.

How different these from Hampshire's winding shores;
Flat, fertile, shady, crown'd with pleasing bow'rs;
Where sweet enclosures vary all the ground,
Whose bursting blooms, and springing flow'rs abound;
And, little vex'd by storms, which scourge the deep,
Of swelling bays the gentle waters sweep,
Or flow each day with the returning hours,
To bathe old Portchester's romantic tow'rs.

Yet sep'rate beauties each of these may boast;
As may the beetling cliff, the rocky coast,
Where
Where jutting headlands part the driving wave,
And constant tides refreshing caverns lave.
Some love the dusky moor, and heath forlorn,
Whose unprolific nature seems to mourn;
While others joy the treach'rous bog to view;
And the rank marshes have admirers too.

For me, my soul delights to wander there,
Where nodding forests fan the peaceful air;
Whose leafy honours climb the mountain's side,
And gain its summit, with a giant stride;
Spread their green bosoms to the rising day,
To meet its radiance, and imbibe its ray;
Then melt in dews, draw the soft flow'rets forth,
And feed those beauteous children of the earth.

These
These scenes I love---uncultur'd scenes like these,
Where wood-crown'd hills my roving fancies please;
While, far beneath, unnumber'd pastures lie,
And a smooth lake reflects the azure sky.

How sweet it is, to mark the deep'ning shade,
By varying forms enchantingly display'd.
The ancient trunk, low stooping to the ground,
By the blind ivy clasp'd in volumes round;
The graceful bandage of the pendant vine,
The waving cypress, and the nodding pine;
The lime sweet-scented, or the holly bright,
The tow'ring poplar trembling at her height;
The elm majestic, bending to the wind,
The beech wide-shooting, and her polish'd rind;

The
The healthy chestnut's mass, and clustering bloom,
Or the white-branching birch athwart the gloom;
All these, or each, as swift the seasons fly,
In groups, or separate, delight the eye:
But most the oak's broad venerable head
Affords my soul a pleasure mix'd with dread;
In spring the nightingale's belov'd retreat,
In summer pleasant, as in autumn sweet;
Ever the refuge of the weak and fair,
The painter's idol, and the prince's care.
Ah best of trees, and emblem of the blest!
Like virtue, still in native grandeur drest;
Strong to protect, and fruitful to sustain,
The shelter, food, and riches of the plain!
Nor less I joy, at parting day, to trace
The sun-gilt forms of Enfield's shaggy chace*;
Elysian bow'rs! whose op'ning glades entice
Our willing feet, a fairy paradise!
Then, loth in mazes sweet, I frequent tread,
Where branching canopies o'erhang my head;
Or, pensive, wind along a gloomy pass,
Whose envious shade consumes the scanty grass;
While gadding vines and brakes its sides display,
And the path widens as it leads to day;
Till all around, on ev'ry side, is seen,
Circled with varying plants, a level green,
On whose enchanting bosom are display'd
Clusters of humble bow'rs that love the shade.

* Particularly alludes to that part of the Chace, which lies about two miles east of Enfield.
There fox-glove's purple spires surround each root,
There the pale eglantine projects her shoot,
Whose blushing tints with softest union meet,
In ornamental neatness simply sweet:
Above, in flaunting circles loosely born,
Th' aspiring honeyfuckle crowns the thorn;
Like a gay mistress, innocently bold,
She woos his straggling limbs with wanton fold;
Whilst the dark ivy fring'd, and moss-clad vine,
Grasp the distorted trunk with snaky twine.
At our first step, the solitary jay
Shoots thro' the glades, and thrists the wiry spray;
Nor aught is heard but songs of birds around,
And silence reigns for voice of human found;
Save when the ploughboy, with provincial squeal,
Calls the stray cattle from their sav'ry meal.

C
O!
O! how delightful here to sit unseen,
Or stretch'd at ease upon the velvet green;
As swift the hours unheeded roll along,
To pore on Shakspeare's page, or Dryden's song;
Imagine woodland nymphs of heav'nly make,
Or the strong satyr bursting thro' the brake!
Such as mild Gessner in his tales displays,
In rude simplicity of ancient days.
Ingenious Gessner!* who at once may claim
The painter's honour, and the poet's fame;
Nice to discriminate, and just to trace,
Uniting strength with ease, and truth to grace.
Here, at each turn, the various charms we find,
Of Ruysdael, Cuyp, and Waterloo, combin'd:

* Gessner of Zurich.
Men, who ran nature's virgin fancies thro',
And faithful all her living graces drew;
Nor e'er, with rash licentiousness of taste,
Her decent garment wantonly displac'd;
View well their works, their slightest touches hoard,
For these with nature liv'd in sweet accord.

Now shift the scene, and let us view a while,
The river-prospects of this favour'd isle.
And first, because the fairest of our stores,
Smooth Thames' gay borders, and delightful shores;
Thames, whose soft windings no obstructions vex;
Thames, whose smooth currents mark the gentler sex;
For female still to me the streams appear,
Thro' all the varying seasons of the year:

C 2

The
The flowers of spring adorn her gracefully
Summer's rich harvests wave around her breast;
Mild autumn's mellow fruits confess her care,
And clustering woods defend from winter's air.
Thus do the circling moons the sex betray;
Should Father Thames be thus unfitly gay?
Or suit these epithets with aged pow'rs,
Fruitful, transparent, lucid, deck'd with flow'rs?
Nor can I yield the male should be combin'd,
With aught that bears the name of river kind;
Ocean alone appears the wat'ry male,
And all the fresh'ning streams his gay serail;
Like gentle females, coyly first they trace
Their winding banks; then flow with steady pace,
Till, grown mature, they rush to his embrace.

But
But say, my friend, will critic laws excuse
These novel fancies of a free-born muse?
It may be not; yet still this truth I know,
From use and habit half their maxims flow;
And all I boast is, simply to impart
A few slight sketches undisguised by art;
To stir your mind with traits from nature caught,
And rouse remembrance by exciting thought;
To call forth native character, whose voice
Loudly proclaims that all depends on choice;
As those who truly study can discern,
Up from the tinted plaster to the sky.

The crazy tow'r, with moss-incrusted head,
The streaky marl-pit, or the ill-propped shed;

Th'
Th' unequal bark, with stretching ivy bound,
The blossom'd hedge, with roving tendrils crown'd;
The giddy mill, that whirls with rapid course,
The rising stream, that renovates its force;
The ravin deep emboft with many a bush,
Thro' which discoulour'd waters wildly rush;
The rustic cottage, deck'd with straggling vines,
And the slow wreathing brook's eccentric lines;
Tho' simple all, yet each, if well exprest,
Possesses pow'r to touch a feeling breast;
And men of taste in this one point unite,
To view such objects with confirm'd delight.
This feeling Rembrant knew, of skil conflct,
And of Batavian landscapes chose the best.
Herein disclosing as much taste to view,
As He, who Latium's smiling pastures drew.
A Mill near Loddelly, drawn & etched by G.C.
( 15 )

Grand as Poussin, to whom ev'n nature yields,
And great as Rosa from Calabrian fields.

O Taste! thou sure unerring guide to fame,
Without whose influence talents lead to shame;
Devoid of thee, tho' fashion yield them place,
Our labours sink to low, but sure, disgrace;
Which, rein'd by reason, and with virtue nurs'd,
Of all created beings forms the first;
Whence life's best ornaments and honours spring,
That gives distinction by distinguishing;
Pow'r of the soul, whose influence all confess,
The polish'd garden, or the wilderness;
Whose wond'rous fitness makes thy nature known,
As well around the cottage as the throne;

Who
Who, blending kindred forms, and chasing strife,
Walk'st with complacent majesty through life:
Taste! be my goddess, all accomplish'd maid!
Sitting with Genius calmly in the shade,
Oft bring thy graceful footsteps to my view;
Where Vinci painted, and where Julio drew;
Where Michael's giant genius warms thy breast,
Or Raphael clasps thee in his arms comprest.
Oh! had my fortunes led me to that coast
Where Grecian arts exist, tho' Rome's be lost;
And of its native honours disfranchised,
Taste only rears her ever blooming crest;
Where just Etrurian, and Athenian forms,
Delight the lover, and the artist warms;
Then had I trac'd the fountain whence they came,
And pass'd my days amid the seats of fame:

Still
Still should the goddess, in a fickle mood,
Who seldom flatters where she is not woo'd,
With pleasing wealth obliterate the past,
And give me independence at the last;
Grateful I'll travel to that distant seat,
For which my bounding heart so long has beat,
Naples' broad bay, whose undulating wave
Chases the smooth bosom of each sun-gilt cave;
Or, fann'd by cool refreshing breezes, plays
In golden lines beneath his soften'd rays;
Naples' wide bay, where palaces arise,
Crown'd with fair islands, blest with cloudless skies,
Where Baia's fields present a length'ning green,
And proud Vesuvius terminates the scene.
Naples' I'll seek, with fond affections warm,
Where ev'ry element contends to charm;
And should Eliza, gentle, good, and fair,
She, whom my inmost thoughts adopt, be there;
And those, who know my heart, my plans approve,
Then, blest with friendship, competence, and love,
As years roll on, remark each changing scene,
And pity those, who tinge their hours with spleen.

END OF THE FIRST PART.
A POEM ON THE LANDSCAPES OF GREAT-BRITAIN.

PART II.

Bold is the man that dares attempt a rhyme,
Where tasteful talents are almost a crime;*

* The Author refers to two or three wretched individuals, on whom, at the period of writing, he had the misfortune to be dependent, and who, as he fears is but too often the case among mere men of business, endeavoured to render his liberal pursuits an obstacle to his advancement in life. The meanest of them having paid the debt of nature, shall not be named; the others are too callous or too ignorant to feel such gentle strokes as these; but as the situation is very common, he will not suppress the lines.

D 2 And,
And, *trade* exalted, with abhorrence views
One only commerce, commerce with the muse.
Yet once again, my soul, as yet untam'd,
Break from the bonds necessity had fram'd;
And, as a slave, with social thoughts possest,
To meet his friend, contracts the hour of rest;
Walks all unseen to execute his plan,
And, in those moments, feels himself a man;
So, when loud clamour with the day is flown,
And evening brings me seasons of my own;
When, stretch'd at ease within my humble cot,
Each busy care that vex'd me is forgot;
Still, calm, compos'd, and satisfied at heart,
I woo the song, or ply my fav'rite art:
Then, wrapt in cool contempt of wealthy names,
My bosom opens, and my spirit flames.

O!
O! could those fools, who born to fortune, know
No sprightly fancy, feel no secret glow;
Or those, whom knavery, with supple knee,
Well-feign'd respect, and winning flattery,
Teaches to smile, and smile, with ceaseless art,
Wind round an honest man, and gain his heart;
And like a serpent, with a shining face,
Wriggle, at last, to confidence and place:
Could those behold me, in such hours as these,
Richly contented, satisfied with ease;
Could they conceive what dignity belongs
To patience, smiling at detected wrongs;
Straight they would sicken with averted eye,
And disappointed, curse their gods, and die.

But
But turn my numbers to the theme ye sought,
Nor sing of beings, scarcely worth a thought.
Revive the welcome, pleasing task anew,
Wave the white quill around, and bring to view
(Where sportive fancy revels uncontroll'd)
The torrents' rapid stream from mountains roll'd;
Whose roaring waters, in a vortex flung,
With dark and melancholy boughs o'erhung,
Boiling, shoot upwards, from unfathom'd caves,
And flow in broken forms of frothy waves.
The troubl'd SEVERN thus, with devious course,
Rolls in strong volumes from her mountain source;
A thousand beauteous streams as yet unfung,
Confess the haughty parent whence she sprung;
A thousand meads, in everlasting green,
Fed with her flowing bounties, own their queen;

While
While she, from ev'ry hill, her strength supplies,
Till, greatly wealthy, to the sea she flies,
Meets his broad wave, her gather'd streams to crown,
And sweetly yielding, pours her waters down.

Nor less her sister Conway, crown'd with wood,
And rocks encompass'd round, augments the flood.
Forth from the giant hills she takes her way,
Resistless winds, and moves with sov'reign sway;
With slow majestic sweep, creates her bed,
Wide, and more wide, the pregnant waters spread;
While herds, from purple hills, look down below,
And rocks inverted on the surface glow.
Fair healthful streams! a mighty, matchless pair!
Strong as your Cambria's sons, sweet as her fair;
( 24 )

Like them, when thwarted, turbid, and enrag'd,
Like them, tho' soon excited, soon affwag'd;
Lovely in anger, beautiful in forms,
And proudly conscious of unrivall'd forms:
Yes, British females, yes, to you belong
The earliest blossoms of my youthful song:
The arching brows, the hazle-rolling eye,
The open forehead, mouth of crimson dye;
The cluff'ring auburn locks of burnish'd glow,
That kiss your ivory shoulders as they flow;
The snowy whiteness of the swelling chest,
Courting the eye, and fuing to be prest;
Cheeks, where the little loves delighted dwell,
And lips, beyond what mortal lips can tell;
All these are yours; and yours, ah more desired!
Virtue, by rose-cheek'd modesty, attir'd;

Love,
Love, faithful love! the animated soul,
And rich fertility to crown the whole.

With one of these, sweet-blooded chary maids,
To measure Clifden's walks, or Piercfield's shades,
Tasting soft converse from her syren tongue,
With all one's youthful nerves to pleasure strung;
Know you, my friend, a more delightful way
To speed the moments of a summer's day?
Or yield our modern modes, which time destroy,
So sweet, so solid, so sublime a joy?
Piercfield!* the sound still vibrates in mine ear,
Thy solemn mazes, still to mem'ry dear,

* Piercfield, the late seat of Valentine Morris, Esq. is situated two miles from Chepstow, in Monmouthshire, and is indisputably the finest spot for natural beauties in this island. The owner's hospitality, it is said, soon deprived him of his residence.
Rush on my fancy with renew'd delight,
And all thy varying foliage bursts to fight!
Here nature heaps the garden's wond'rous mound,
Here rears the windy cliffs tremendous bound;
Affords the fertile foil a rich supply,
And leads the windings of the graceful Wye:
Here nature feeds the verdure, points the views,
Whilst art, her handmaid, soberly pursues;
Supports her sacred train, divides the groves,
And, at due distance, with discretion moves.

O Nature! hear the humblest of thy sons,
Whose blood, uncheck'd by soul intemperate, runs;
Who loves thy precepts, owns thy gentle sway,
And, by thy rules unerring, shapes his way;

Grant
Grant me, dear goddess, whether doom'd to bear
The city's smoaky, health-destroying air;
Or should some future accident allot
A decent competence, and choice of spot;
Grant me to find, in all thy wide domain,
A seat where none disturbs thy quiet reign:
Where no rich miscreant, fatally misplac'd,
Narrows thy bounties by perverted taste;
Lifts the sharp sounding axe among thy trees;
(The fancied haunts of nymphs and dryades)
And, with remorseless ignorance and rage,
Fells in a day the product of an age.
Not so thy tenant, Piercfield, he, with care,
Spread thy luxuriant shoots, and learnt to spare;
Ah! cruel fate! that he whose bounteous hand,
Dealt smiling plenty o'er thy grateful land;
( 28 )

Who made thy venerable groves his care,
That he, who nurtur'd thy shades, should not be there.

Now, long neglected, in thy grass grown walks,
The wily fox unnoticed boldly stalks;
And, in the cool alcoves desir'd retreat,
The timid hare usurps the vacant seat.

To happier Clifden* turn my muse, and sing
Its wood-cloth'd winding hill, its stream, its spring.

* Clifden gives a fine specimen of the magnificent style of nature at Piercfield; but with all its beauties, to those who have visited the latter, it seems only a fragment torn from the sides of that majestic work; and yet, between Clifden and Piercfield, there is nothing approaching it in grandeur. The country, about the Devil's Bridge and Havod, surpasses either; containing scenery so supremely beautiful, that the Author, having passed a few days there making drawings, meditated the design of composing a description to accompany them; but too much enchanted to give it with coolness, he relinquished the contemplation; and all he can now say is, that having,
A wond'rous spring, with glades encompas'd round,
Whose rising waters yield a murm'ring sound;
High overhanging, nodding woods ascend,
Around, pale waving willows graceful bend;
Beneath, a dazied carpet sweetly blows,
And friendly seats invite to cool repose:
While ThAMES unruff'd glides with transcien t gleam,
Kis'd by the bending boughs that drink the stream.

Yet what are these, cries Fancy, what are these,
(Tho' plann'd by princes in luxurious eafe)
( 30 )

Compar'd with Cambria's wild untravell'd hills
Worn with the waters of a thousand rills;
Where torrents thunder down on ev'ry side,
And subterraneous streams in silence glide?
There barren rocks and shelving ridges frown,
Whence ev'ry winter rolls a fragment down;
There melancholy pools the vallies fill,
Or cultivation climbs the topmost hill;
And, till aspiring mountains part the skies,
Meadows, fields, forests, in succession rise:
How Cluyd's laughing vale her wealth displays,
Where Dee wide-rushing thro' her verdure strays;
Roars in Llangollen's wild romantic seat,
And bathes, with dingy wave, the Berwin's feet?

Matchless
Matchless Llangollen!* whose neglected charms
Are left to cottages and straggling farms;
For save Irene's friendly tasteful pair,
No gentle tenants deem them worth their care.
It was not thus, when on the mountain's brow,
Dinas* proud battlements look'd down below;
It was not thus when grac'd with ladies' bow'rs,
Wit, valour, beauty, fill'd those cloud-capt tow'rs;
Then in each chamber flow'd the festive bowl,
Then the harp's merry tinkling cheer'd the soul;

* Llangollen (pronounced Clangothlin), a village not far from Wyn-stay, which, although surrounded every way by the most romantic walks and rides, and healthily situated, has not been made the residence of any genteel people, except Miss Butler, and Miss Ponsonby, who, a few years ago, it is said, came from Ireland for that purpose.

* Castle-Dinas-Bran, or Crow-Castle, of which Mr. Pennant gives some curious particulars in his Welsh Tour.

And,
And, as Myfanwy Vechan tript along,
Pale am’rous Hoel breath’d his love-sick song.
But now, of ev’ry social charm bereft,
(Not e’en a vestige of thy greatness left)
To travelling winds, and blasting storms, a prey,
In the last stages of a slow decay;
Scarce of thy mould’ring walls enough remain,
To screen the shepherd from the driving rain.

Yet these are silent scenes, my friend, which still
Assist the painter, and excite his skill.
In the lone courts of Chepstow’s ivy’d bow’rs,
Near Conway’s, Kennilworth’s, or Ludlow’s tow’rs;
Oft the mild artist fits so long alone,
That birds approaching deem him turn’d to stone;

Lost
Loft in the pleasures of a pensive mood,
Forgets his nature, and neglects his food;
Nor end his labours till, with dusky stole,
Night drops her sable curtain o'er the whole.
Then in the grated chamber's dull retreat,
Some musing poet's pacing footsteps beat,
Where as the moon's unequal shadows fall,
His muttering image glides along the wall.

How strong the fancy works on such a spot:
(No legend old or school-boy tale forgets),
First in the quickly-teeming bosom springs
The thought of captive maids, or murder'd kings;
Next proud usurpers, and intemperate hosts;
Then the swift rushing of unquiet ghosts;
F
Till
Till half affrighted from the thought we turn,
And bid the light-foot faries leave the fern:
They come, they gambol on the dazy'd green,
And fill the unfally'd mind with forms serene.

But rest my hand, and check th' excursive tale,
Left the lines languish, and attention fail.
Which of our country's frugal charms remain,
'To shade the paper, or the canvas stain;
Tho' rude my notes, and flight my lyre be strung,
Which of our country's charms remain unfung?
The thymey hills, where flocks and shepherds rove,
The flow'ry pasture, and the shady grove;

The
The gushing rill, the torrent's rapid tide,
The winding streams by shallow brooks supply'd;
The silent greenwood's melancholy gloom,
Where insects flutter, and where buds perfume;
The naked rock, th' inhospitable moor;
The roaring surges, and the sounding shore:
Tho' rude my notes, and slight my lyre be strung;
Each, as the muse inspir'd, my voice has sung.
And if these traits, for that alone design'd,
Recall the face of Albion to your mind;
If, as the friendly numbers artless flow,
Some rural features in description glow:
Enough for me---for reason long has taught
That, when the lab'ring soul is overwrought,
When pale with studious care, and close restraint,
The head is weary, and the heart is faint:
Then, if the rural song with ardour burns,
The mind relaxes, and its spring returns.

FINIS.

Of this Poem a very small number has been printed, and some of the Etchings
laid aside that were intended for it, on account of the Author's Diffidence of success,
it being his first essay in printing. Should it meet with the approbation of the judicious,
it will then be reprinted, with Views of each of the Scenes mentioned in the Poem,
from his original Drawings.