

AGE.

AGE, thou the loss of health and friends shalt mourn !
 But thou art passing to that night-still bourne,
 Where labour sleeps. The linnet, chattering loud
 To the May morn, shall sing ; thou, in thy shroud,
 Forgetful and forgotten, sink to rest ;
 And grass-green be the sod upon thy breast !

ON A LANDSCAPE BY RUBENS.

NAY, let us gaze, ev'n till the sense is full,
 Upon the rich creation, shadowed so
 That not great Nature, in her loftiest pomp
 Of living beauty, ever on the sight
 Rose more magnificent ; nor aught so fair
 Hath Fancy, in her wildest, brightest mood,
 Imaged of things most lovely, when the sounds
 Of this cold cloudy world at distance sink,
 And all alone the warm idea lives
 Of what is great, or beautiful, or good,
 In Nature's general plan.

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So the vast scope,
 O Rubens ! of thy mighty mind, and such
 The fervour of thy pencil, pouring wide
 The still illumination, that the mind
 Pauses, absorbed, and scarcely thinks what powers
 Of mortal art the sweet enchantment wrought.
 She sees the painter, with no human touch,
 Create, embellish, animate at will,
 The mimic scenes, from Nature's ampler range
 Caught as by inspiration ; while the clouds,

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High wandering, and the fairest form of things, 22
Seem at his bidding to emerge, and burn
With radiance and with life !

Let us, subdued,
Now to the magic of the moment lose
The thoughts of life, and mingle every sense
Ev'n in the scenes before us !

The fresh morn
Of summer shines ; the white clouds of the east 30
Are crisped ; beneath, the bright blue champaign steams ;
The banks, the meadows, and the flowers, send up
An incensed exhalation, like the meek
And holy praise of Him whose soul's deep joy
The lone woods witness. Thou, whose heart is sick
Of vanities ; who, in the throng of men,
Dost feel no lenient fellowship ; whose eye
Turns, with a languid carelessness, around
Upon the toiling crowd, still murmuring on,
Restless ;—oh, think, in summer scenes like these, 40
How sweet the sense of quiet gladness is,
That, like the silent breath of morning, steals
From lowly nooks, and feels itself expand
Amid the works of Nature, to the Power
That made them : to the awful thought of Him
Who, when the morning stars shouted for joy,
Bade the great sun from tenfold darkness burst,
The green earth roll in light, and solitude
First hear the voice of man, whilst hills and woods
Stood eminent, in orient hues arrayed, 50
His dwelling ; and all living Nature smiled,
As in this pictured semblance, beaming full
Before us !

Mark again the various view :
Some city's far-off spires and domes appear,

Breaking the long horizon, where the morn 56
 Sits blue and soft : what glowing imagery
 Is spread beneath !—Towns, villages, light smoke,
 And scarce-seen windmill-sails, and devious woods,
 Chequering 'mid sunshine the 'grass-level land, 60
 That stretches from the sight.

Now nearer trace

The forms of trees distinct—the broad brown oak ;
 The poplars, that, with silvery trunks, incline,
 Shading the lonely castle ; flakes of light
 Are flung behind the massy groups, that, now
 Enlarging and enlarging still, unfold
 Their separate beauties. But awhile delay ;
 Pass the foot-bridge, and listen (for we hear,
 Or think we hear her), listen to the song 70
 Of yonder milkmaid, as she brims her pail ;
 Whilst, in the yellow pasture, pensive near,
 The red cows ruminant.

Break off, break off, for lo ! where, all alarmed,
 The small birds,¹ from the late resounding perch,
 Fly various, hushed their early song ; and mark,
 Beneath the darkness of the bramble-bank
 That overhangs the half-seen brook, where nod
 The flowing rushes, dew-besprent, with breast
 Ruddy, and emerald wing, the kingfisher 80
 Steals through the dripping sedge away. What shape
 Of terrors scares the woodland habitants,
 Marring the music of the dawn ? Look round ;
 See, where he creeps, beneath the willowy stump,
 Cowering and low, step silent after step,
 The booted fowler : keen his look, and fixed
 Upon the adverse bank, while, with firm hand,

¹ The landscape is on so large a scale, that all these circumstances are most accurately delineated.

He grasps the deadly tube ; his dog, with ears 88
Hung back, and still and steady eye of fire,
Points to the prey ; the boor, intent, moves on
Panting, and creeping close beneath the leaves,
And fears lest ev'n the rustling reeds betray
His footfall ; nearer yet, and yet more near,
He stalks. Who now shall save the heedless group,
The speckled partridges, that in the sun,
On yonder hillock green, across the stream,
Bask unalarmed beneath the hawthorn bush,
Whose aged boughs the crawling blackberry
Entwines !

And thus, upon the sweetest scenes 100
Of human loveliness, and social peace
Domestic, when the full fond heart reclines
Upon its hopes, and almost mingles tears
Of joy, to think that in this hollow world
Such bliss should be its portion ; then (alas,
The bitter change !), then, with his unheard step,
In darkness shrouded, yet approaching fast,
Death, from amidst the sunny flowers, lifts up
His giant dread anatomy, and smites,
Smites the fair prospect once, whilst every bloom 110
Hangs shrivelled, and a sound of mourning fills
The lone and blasted valley : but no sound
Is here of sorrow or of death, though she,
The country Kate, with shining morning cheek
(Who, in the tumbril, with her market-gear,
Sits seated high), seems to expect the flash
Exploding, that shall lay the innocent
And feathered tenants of the landscape low.
Not so the clown, who, heedless whether life
Or death betide, across the plashy ford 120

Drives slow ; the beasts plod on, foot following foot, 121
 Aged and grave, with half-erected ears,
 As now his whip above their matted manes
 Hangs tremulous, while the dark and shallow stream
 Flashes beneath their fetlock : he, astride
 On harness saddle, not a sidelong look
 Deigns at the breathing landscape, or the maid
 Smiling behind ; the cold and lifeless calf
 Her sole companion : and so mated oft 129
 Is some sweet maid, whose thrilling heart was formed
 For dearer fellowship. But lift the eye,
 And hail the abode of rural ease. The man
 Walks forth, from yonder antique hall, that looks
 The mistress of the scene ; its turrets gleam
 Amid the trees, and cheerful smoke is seen,
 As if no spectred shape (though most retired
 The spot) there ever wandered, stoled in white,
 Along the midnight chambers ; but quaint Mab
 Her tiny revels led, till the rare dawn
 Peeped out, and chanticleer his shrill alarm 140
 Beneath the window rang, then, with a wink,
 The shadowy rout have vanished !

As the morn

Jocund ascends, how lovely is the view
 To him who owns the fair domain ! The friend
 Of his still hours is near, to whom he vowed
 His truth ; her eyes reflect his bliss ; his heart
 Beats high with joy ; his little children play,
 Pleased, in his pathway ; one the scattered flowers
 Straggling collects, the other spreads its arms, 150
 In speechless blandishment, upon the neck
 Of its caressing nurse.

Still let us gaze,

And image every form of heartfelt joy

Which scenes like these bestow, that charm the sight,
Yet soothe the spirit. All is quiet here, 156
Yet cheerful as the green sea, when it shines
In some still bay, shines in its loneliness
Beneath the breeze, that moves, and hardly moves,
The placid surface.

On the balustrade
Of the old bridge, that o'er the moat is thrown,
The fisher with his angle leans intent,
And turns, from the bright pomp of spreading plains,
To watch the nimble fry, that glancing oft
Beneath the gray arch shoot! Oh, happiest he
Who steals through life, untroubled as unseen!
The distant city, with its crowded spires,
That dimly shines upon his view, awakes
No thought but that of pleasure more composed, 170
As the winds whisper him to sounder sleep.
He leans upon the faithful arm of her
For whom his youthful heart beat, fondly beat,
When life was new: time steals away, yet health
And exercise are his; and in these shades,
Though sometimes he has mourned a proud world's wrong,
He feels an independence that all cares
Breasts with a carol of content; he hears
The green leaves of his old paternal trees
Make music, soothing as they stir: the elm, 180
And poplar with its silvery trunk, that shades
The green sward of the bank before his porch,
Are to him as companions;—whilst he turns
With more endearment to the living smile
Of those his infants, who, when he is dead,
Shall hear the music of the self-same trees
Waving, till years roll on, and their gray hairs
Go to the dust in peace.

Away, sad thought !

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Lo ! where the morning light, through the dark wood,
 Upon the window-pane is flung like fire,
 Hail, Life and Hope ; and thou, great work of art,
 That 'mid this populous and busy swarm
 Of men dost smile serene, as with the hues
 Of fairest, grandest Nature ; may'st thou speak
 Not vainly of the endearments and best joys
 That Nature yields. The manliest heart that swells
 With honest English feelings,—while the eye,
 Saddened, but not cast down, beholds far off
 The darkness of the onward rolling storm,—
 Charmed for a moment by this mantling view,
 Its anxious tumults shall suspend : and such,
 The pensive patriot shall exclaim, thy scenes,
 My own beloved country, such the abode
 Of rural peace ! and while the soul has warmth,
 And voice has energy, the brave arm strength,
 England, thou shalt not fall ! The day shall come,
 Yes, and now is, that thou shalt lift thyself ;
 And woe to him who sets upon thy shores
 His hostile foot ! Proud victor though he be,
 His bloody march shall never soil a flower
 That hangs its sweet head, in the morning dew,
 On thy green village banks ! His mustered hosts
 Shall be rolled back in thousands, and the surge
 Bury them ! Then, when peace illumines once more,
 My country, thy green nooks and inmost vales,
 It will be sweet amidst the forest glens
 To stray, and think upon the distant storm
 That howled, but injured not !

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At thoughts like these,

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What heart, what English heart, but shall beat high !
 Meantime, its keen flash passed, thine eye intent,

Beaumont, shall trace the master-strokes of art, 223
And view the assemblage of the finished piece,
As with his skill who formed it : ruder views,
Savage, with solitary pines, hung high
Amid the broken crags (where scowling wait
The fierce banditti), stern Salvator's hand
Shall aptly shade : o'er Poussin's clustering domes,
With ampler umbrage, the black woods shall hang, 230
Beneath whose waving gloom the sudden flash
Of broken light upon the brawling stream
Is flung below.

Aërial Claude shall paint
The gray fane peering o'er the summer woods,
The azure lake below, or distant seas,
And sails, in the pellucid atmosphere,
Soft gleaming to the morn. Dark on the rock,
Where the red lightnings burst, shall Wilson stand,
Like mighty Shakspeare, whom the imps of fire 240
Await. Nor oh, sweet Gainsborough ! shall thee
The Muse forget, whose simple landscape smiles
Attractive, whether we delight to view
The cottage chimney through the high wood peep ;
Or beggar beauty stretch her little hand,
With look most innocent ; or homeward kine
Wind through the hollow road at eventide,
Or browse the straggling branches.

Scenes like these
Shall charm all hearts, while truth and beauty live, 250
And Nature's pictured loveliness shall own
Each master's varied touch ; but chiefly thou,
Great Rubens ! shalt the willing senses lead,
Enamoured of the varied imagery,
That fills the vivid canvas, swelling still
On the enraptured eye of taste, and still

New charms unfolding ; though minute, yet grand, 257
 Simple, yet most luxuriant ; every light
 And every shade, greatly opposed, and all
 Subservient to one magical effect
 Of truth and harmony.

So glows the scene ;

And to the pensive thought refined displays
 The richest rural poem. Oh, may views
 So pictured animate thy classic mind,
 Beaumont, to wander 'mid Sicilian scenes,
 And catch the beauties of the pastoral bard,¹
 Shadowing his wildest landscapes ! Ætna's fires,
 Bebrycian rocks, Anapus' holy stream,
 And woods of ancient Pan ; the broken crag 270
 And the old fisher here ; the purple vines
 There bending ; and the smiling boy set down
 To guard, who, innocent and happy, weaves,
 Intent, his rushy basket, to ensnare
 The chirping grasshoppers, nor sees the while
 The lean fox meditate her morning meal,
 Eyeing his scrip askance ; whilst further on
 Another treads the purple grapes—he sits,
 Nor aught regards, but the green rush he weaves.

O Beaumont ! let this pomp of light and shade 280
 Wake thee, to paint the woods that the sweet Muse
 Has consecrated : then the summer scenes
 Of Phasidamus, clad in richer light,
 Shall glow, the glancing poplars, and clear fount ;
 While distant times admire (as now we trace
 This summer-mantling view) hoar Ætna's pines,
 The vine-hung grotts, and branching planes, that shade
 The silver Arethusa's stealing wave.

¹ Theocritus. Alluding to a design of illustrating the *picturesque character* of the venerable Sicilian, by paintings of Sir George, from new translations of Messrs Sotheby, Rogers, Howley, W. Spencer, and the author.