



The ENTHUSIAST:
OR THE
LOVER of NATURE.
A POEM.

By the Rev. Mr. JOSEPH WARTON.

Written in 1740.

Rure vero barbaroque lætatur.

MARTIAL.

————— *Ut ! mihi devio*

Rupes, & vacuum nemus

Mirari libet !

HORACE.

YE green-rob'd Dryads, oft' at dusky eve
By wondering shepherds seen, to forests brown,
To unfrequented meads, and pathless wilds,
Lead me from gardens deck'd with art's vain pomps.
Can gilt alcoves, can marble-mimic gods,
Parterres embroider'd, obelisks, and urns
Of high relief; can the long, spreading lake,
Or vista lessening to the sight; can Stow,
With all her Attic fanes, such raptures raise,
As the thrush-haunted copse, where lightly leaps
The fearful fawn the rustling leaves along,

And the brisk squirrel sports from bough to bough,
 While from an hollow oak, whose naked roots
 O'erhang a pensive rill, the busy bees
 Hum drowsy lullabies? The bards of old,
 Fair Nature's friends, sought such retreats, to charm
 Sweet Echo with their songs; oft' too they met
 In summer evenings, near sequester'd bow'rs,
 Or mountain-nymph, or muse, and eager learnt
 The moral strains she taught to mend mankind.
 As to a secret grot *Ægeria* stole
 With patriot Numa, and in silent night
 Whisper'd him sacred laws, he list'ning sat
 Rapt with her virtuous voice, old Tyber lean'd
 Attentive on his urn, and hush'd his waves.

Rich in her weeping country's spoils Versailles
 May boast a thousand fountains, that can cast
 The tortur'd waters to the distant heav'ns;
 Yet let me choose some pine-topt precipice
 Abrupt and shaggy, whence a foamy stream,
 Like Anio, tumbling roars; or some black heath,
 Where straggling stands the mournful juniper,
 Or yew-tree scath'd; while in clear prospect round,
 From the grove's bosom spires emerge, and smoak
 In bluish wreaths ascends, ripe harvests wave,
 Low, lonely cottages, and ruin'd tops
 Of Gothick battlements appear, and streams
 Beneath the sun-beams twinkle.—The shrill lark,
 That wakes the woodman to his early task,

Or

Or love-sick Philomel, whose luscious lays
 Sooth lone night-wanderers, the moaning dove
 Pitied by listening milk-maid, far excel
 The deep-mouth viol, the soul-lulling lute,
 And battle-breathing trumpet. Artful sounds!
 That please not like the choristers of air,
 When first they hail th' approach of laughing May.

Can Kent design like Nature? Mark where Thames
 Plenty and pleasure pours thro' ^e Lincoln's meads;
 Can the great artist, tho' with taste supreme
 Endu'd, one beauty to this Eden add?
 Tho' he, by rules unfetter'd, boldly scorns
 Formality and Method, round and square
 Disdaining, plans irregularly great.

Creative Titian, can thy vivid strokes,
 Or thine, O graceful Raphael, dare to vie
 With the rich tints that paint the breathing mead?
 The thousand-colour'd tulip, violet's bell
 Snow-clad and meek, the vermil-tinctur'd rose,
 And golden crocus?—Yet with these the maid,
 Phillis or Phoebe at a feast or wake,
 Her jetty locks enamels; fairer she,
 In innocence and home-spun vestments dress'd,
 Than if cœrulean sapphires at her ears
 Shone pendent, or a precious diamond-cross
 Heav'd gently on her panting bosom white.

^e *The earl of Lincoln's terrace at Weybridge in Surrey.*

Yon' shepherd idly stretch'd on the rude rock,
 Listening to dashing waves, and sea mews' clang
 High-hovering o'er his head, who views beneath
 The dolphin dancing o'er the level brine,
 Feels more true blifs than the proud ammiral,
 Amid his vessels bright with burnish'd gold
 And filken streamers, tho' his lordly nod
 Ten thousand war-worn mariners revere.
 And great Æneas ^h gaz'd with more delight
 On the rough mountain shagg'd with horrid shades,
 (Where cloud-compelling Jove, as fancy dream'd,
 Descending shook his direful Ægis black)
 Than if he enter'd the high Capitol
 On golden columns rear'd, a conquer'd world
 Exhausted, to enrich its stately head.
 More pleas'd he slept in poor Evander's cott
 On shaggy skins, lull'd by sweet nightingales,
 Than if a Nero, in an age refin'd,
 Beneath a gorgeous canopy had plac'd
 His royal guest, and bade his minstrels sound
 Soft slumb'rous Lydian airs, to sooth his rest.

ⁱ Happy the first of men, ere yet confin'd
 To smoaky cities; who in sheltering groves,
 Warm caves, and deep-sunk vallies liv'd and lov'd,
 By cares unwounded; what the sun and showers,

^h *Æneid* VIII.

ⁱ See *Lucretius*, lib. V.

And genial earth untillag'd could produce,
 They gather'd grateful, or the acorn brown,
 Or blushing berry ; by the liquid lapse
 Of murm'ring waters call'd to slake their thirst,
 Or with fair nymphs their sun-brown limbs to bathe ;
 With nymphs who fondly clasp'd their fav'rite youths,
 Unaw'd by shame, beneath the beechen shade,
 Nor wiles, nor artificial coyness knew.
 Then doors and walls were not ; the melting maid
 Nor frowns of parents fear'd, nor husband's threats ;
 Nor had curs'd gold their tender hearts allur'd :
 Then beauty was not venal. Injur'd love,
 O whither, god of raptures, art thou fled ?
 While Avarice waves his golden wand around,
 Abhor'd magician, and his costly cup
 Prepares with baneful drugs, t' enchant the souls
 Of each low-thoughted fair to wed for gain.

In earth's first infancy (as sung the * bard,
 Who strongly painted what he boldly thought)
 Tho' the fierce north oft smote with iron whip
 Their shiv'ring limbs, tho' oft the bristly boar
 Or hungry lion 'woke them with their howls,
 And scar'd them from their moss-grown caves to rove
 Houseless and cold in dark tempestuous nights ;
 Yet were not myriads in embattel'd fields
 Swept off at once, nor had the raging seas
 O'erwhelm'd the found'ring bark and shrieking crew ;

* *Lucretius.*

In vain the glassy ocean smil'd to tempt
 The jolly sailer unsuspecting harm,
 For commerce ne'er had spread her swelling sails,
 Nor had the wond'ring Nereids ever heard
 The dashing oar : then famine, want, and pine,
 Sunk to the grave their fainting limbs ; but us,
 Diseaseful dainties, riot and excess,
 And feverish luxury destroy. In brakes,
 Or marshes wild unknowingly they crop'd
 Herbs of malignant juice ; to realms remote
 While we for powerful poisons madly roam,
 From every noxious herb collecting death.
 What tho' unknown to those primæval fires
 The well-arch'd dome, peopled with breathing forms
 By fair Italia's skilful hand, unknown
 The shapely column, and the crumbling busts
 Of awful ancestors in long descent ?
 Yet why should man mistaken deem it nobler
 To dwell in palaces, and high-roof'd halls,
 Than in God's forests, architect supreme !
 Say, is the Persian carpet, than the field's
 Or meadow's mantle gay, more richly wov'n ;
 Or softer to the votaries of ease
 Than bladed grass, perfum'd with dew-dropt flow'rs ?
 O taste corrupt ! that luxury and pomp,
 In specious names of polish'd manners veil'd,
 Should proudly banish Nature's simple charms !
 All-beauteous Nature ! by thy boundless charms
 Oppress'd, O where shall I begin thy praise,

Where

Where turn th' ecstatic eye, how ease my breast
 That pants with wild astonishment and love !
 Dark forests, and the op'ning lawn, refresh'd
 With ever-gushing brooks, hill, meadow, dale,
 The balmy bean-field, the gay-clover'd close,
 So sweetly interchang'd, the lowing ox,
 The playful lamb, the distant water-fall
 Now faintly heard, now swelling with the breeze,
 The sound of pastoral reed from hazel-bower,
 The choral birds, the neighing steed, that snuffs
 His dappled mate, stung with intense desire,
 The ripen'd orchard when the ruddy orbs
 Betwixt the green leaves blush, the azure skies,
 The chearful sun that thro' earth's vitals pours
 Delight and health and heat ; all, all conspire,
 To raise, to sooth, to harmonize the mind,
 To lift on wings of praise, to the great Sire
 Of being and of beauty, at whose nod
 Creation started from the gloomy vault
 Of dreary Chaos, while the griesly king
 Murmur'd to feel his boisterous power confin'd.

What are the lays of artful Addison,
 Coldly correct, to Shakespear's warblings wild ?
 Whom on the winding Avon's willow'd banks
 Fair Fancy found, and bore the smiling babe
 To a close cavern : (still the shepherds shew
 The sacred place, whence with religious awe
 They hear, returning from the field at eve,

Strange

Strange whisp'rings of sweet musick thro' the air)
 Here, as with honey gather'd from the rock,
 She fed the little prattler, and with songs
 Oft' sooth'd his wand'ring ears, with deep delight
 On her soft lap he sat, and caught the sounds.

Oft near some crowded city would I walk,
 Listening the far-off noises, rattling cars,
 Loud shouts of joy, sad shrieks of sorrow, knells
 Full slowly tolling, instruments of trade,
 Striking mine ears with one deep-swellling hum.
 Or wand'ring near the sea, attend the sounds
 Of hollow winds, and ever-beating waves,
 Ev'n when wild tempests swallow up the plains,
 And Boreas' blasts, big hail, and rains combine
 To shake the groves and mountains, would I sit,
 Pensively musing on th' outrageous crimes
 That wake heav'n's vengeance : at such solemn hours,
 Dæmons and goblins thro' the dark air shriek,
 While Hecat, with her black-brow'd sisters nine,
 Rides o'er the earth, and scatters woes and death.
 Then too, they say, in dear Ægyptian wilds
 The lion and the tiger prowl for prey
 With roarings loud ! the list'ning traveller
 Starts fear-struck, while the hollow-echoing vaults
 Of pyramids increase the deathful sounds.

But let me never fail in cloudless nights,
 When silent Cynthia in her silver car
 Thro' the blue concave slides, when shine the hills,
Twinkle

Twinkle the streams, and woods look tip'd with gold,
 To seek some level mead, and there invoke
 Old Midnight's sister Contemplation fage,
 (Queen of the rugged brow, and stern-fixt eye)
 To lift my soul above this little earth,
 This folly-fetter'd world: to purge my ears,
 That I may hear the rolling planet's song,
 And tuneful turning spheres: if this debarr'd.
 The little Fayes that dance in neighbouring dales,
 Sipping the night-dew, while they laugh and love,
 Shall charm me with aërial notes. — As thus
 I wander musing, lo, what awful forms
 Yonder appear! sharp-ey'd Philosophy
 Clad in dun robes, an eagle on his wrist,
 First meets my eye; next, virgin Solitude
 Serene, who blushes at each gazer's sight;
 Then Wisdom's hoary head, with crutch in hand,
 Trembling, and bent with age; last Virtue's self
 Smiling, in white array'd, who with her leads
 Sweet Innocence, that prattles by her side,
 A naked boy! — Harrafs'd with fear I stop,
 I gaze, when Virtue thus — 'Whoe'er thou art,
 ' Mortal, by whom I deign to be beheld
 ' In these my midnight-walks; depart, and say
 ' That henceforth I and my immortal train
 ' Forfake Britannia's isle; who fondly stoops
 ' To Vice, her favourite paramour.' — She spoke,
 And as she turn'd, her round and rosy neck,

Her

Her flowing train, and long ambrosial hair,
Breathing rich odours, I enamour'd view.

O who will bear me then to western climes,
(Since Virtue leaves our wretched land) to fields
Yet unpolluted with Iberian swords:
The isles of innocence, from mortal view
Deeply retir'd, beneath a plantane's shade,
Where Happiness and Quiet sit enthron'd,
With simple Indian swains, that I may hunt
The boar and tiger thro' Savannah's wild,
Thro' fragrant desarts, and thro' citron-groves.
There fed on dates and herbs, would I despise
The far-fetch'd cates of Luxury, and hoards
Of narrow-hearted Avarice; nor heed
The distant din of the tumultuous world.
So when rude whirlwinds rouze the roaring main,
Beneath fair Thetis sits, in choral caves,
Serenely gay, nor sinking sailors' cries
Disturb her sportive nymphs, who round her form
The light fantastick dance, or for her hair
Weave rosy crowns, or with according lutes
Grace the soft warbles of her honied voice.