

PLATE 1

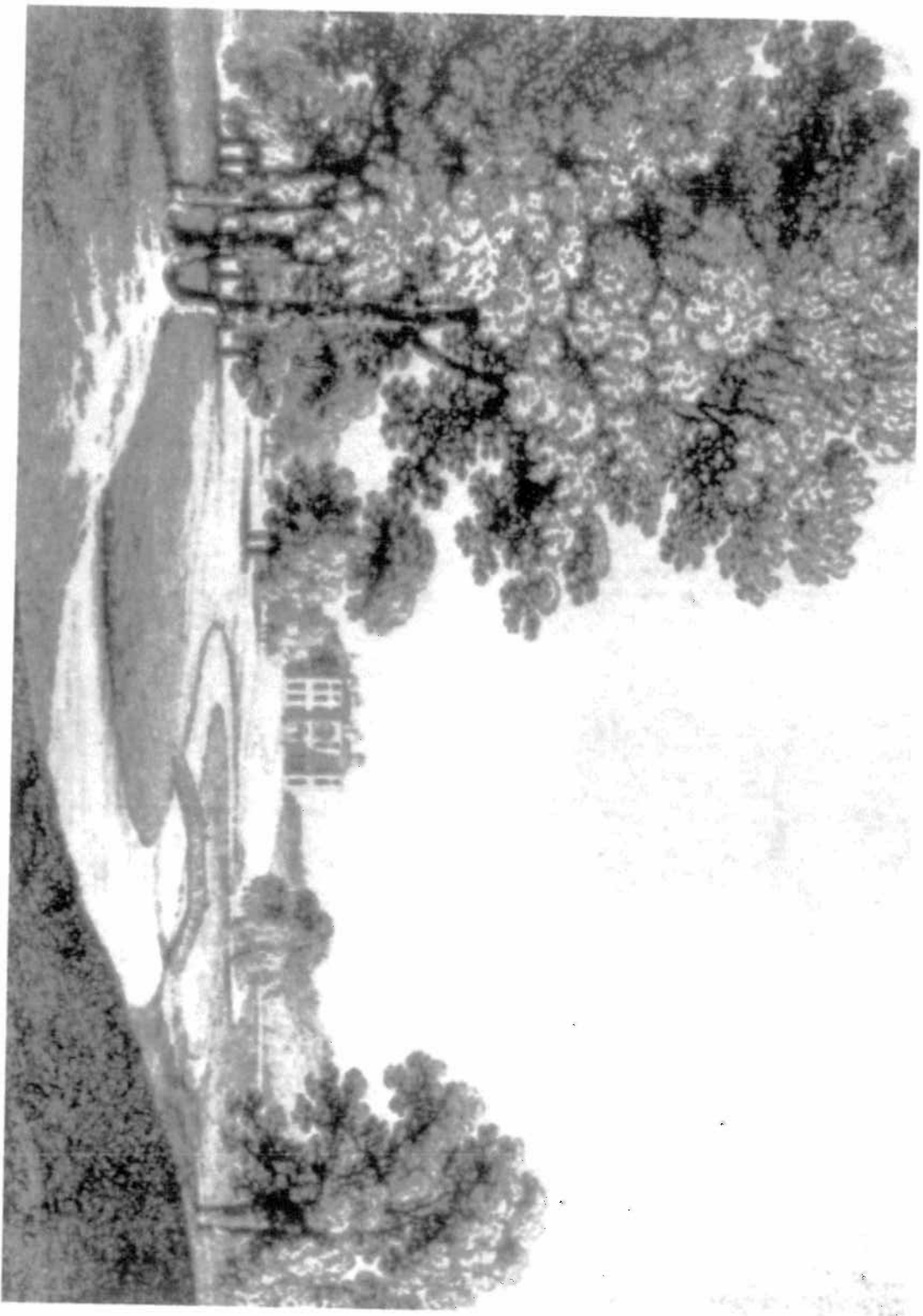


PLATE 2

THE LANDSCAPE.

BOOK II.

OFt when I've seen some lonely mansion stand,
Fresh from th' improver's desolating hand,
'Midst shaven lawns, that far around it creep
In one eternal undulating sweep ;
And scatter'd clumps, that nod at one another, 5
Each stiffly waving to its formal brother ;
Tir'd with th' extensive scene, so dull and bare,
To Heav'n devoutly I've address'd my pray'r,—
Again the moss-grown terraces to raise,
And spread the labyrinth's perplexing maze ; 10
Replace in even lines the ductile yew,
And plant again the ancient avenue.
Some features then, at least, we should obtain,
To mark this flat, insipid, waving plain ;

v. 13. See plate I.—In the distance, a mansion-house with the ancient decorations ; and in plate II. the same modernized.

Some vary'd tints and forms would intervene, 15
To break this uniform, eternal green.

E'en the trimm'd hedges, that inclos'd the field,
Some consolation to the eye might yield;
But even these are studiously remov'd,
And clumps and bareness only are approv'd. 20
Though the old system against nature stood,
At least in this, 'twas negatively good:—
Inclos'd by walls, and terraces, and mounds,
Its mischiefs were confin'd to narrow bounds;
Just round the house, in formal angles trac'd, 25
It mov'd responsive to the builder's taste;
Walls answer'd walls, and alleys, long and thin,
Mimick'd the endless passages within.

But kings of yew, and goddesses of lead,
Could never far their baneful influence spread; 30
Coop'd in the garden's safe and narrow bounds,
They never dar'd invade the open grounds;
Where still the roving ox, or browsing deer,
From such prim despots kept the country clear;
While uncorrupted still, on every side, 35
The ancient forest rose in savage pride;
And in its native dignity display'd
Each hanging wood and ever verdant glade;

Where ev'ry shaggy shrub and spreading tree
 Proclaim'd the seat of native liberty ; 40
 In loose and vary'd groups unheeded thrown,
 And never taught the planter's care to own :
 Some, tow'ring upwards, spread their arms in state ;
 And others, bending low, appear'd to wait :
 While scatter'd thorns, brows'd by the goat and deer,
 Rose all around, and let no lines appear. 46

Such groups did Claude's light pencil often trace,
 The foreground of some classic scene to grace ;
 Such, humble Waterloo, to nature true,
 Beside the copse, or village pasture drew.

But ah ! how diff'rent is the formal lump
 Which the improver plants, and calls a clump !
 Break, break, ye nymphs, the fence that guards it round !
 With browsing cattle, all its forms confound !
 As chance or fate will have it, let it grow ;— 55
 Here spiring high ;—there cut, or trampled low.
 No apter ornament can taste provide
 T'embellish beauty, or defect to hide ;

v. 47. See plate I. in the foreground.

v. 51. See plate II. a clump substituted to the group in the preceding plate.

If train'd with care and undiscover'd skill,
 Its just department in the scene to fill ; 60
 But with reserve and caution be it seen,
 Nor e'er surrounded by the shaven green ;
 But in the foreground boldly let it rise,
 Or join'd with other features meet the eyes :
 The distant mansion, seen beneath its shade, 65
 Is often advantageously display'd :—
 But here, once more, ye rural muses, weep
 The ivy'd balustrades, and terrace steep ;
 Walls, mellow'd into harmony by time,
 O'er which fantastic creepers us'd to climb ; 70
 While statues, labyrinths, and alleys, pent
 Within their bounds, at least were innocent !
 Our modern taste, alas ! no limit knows :—
 O'er hill, o'er dale, through woods and fields it flows ;
 Spreading o'er all its unprolific spawn, 75
 In never-ending sheets of vapid lawn.
 True composition all extremes rejects,
 And just proportions still, of all, selects ;

v. 65. See plate I.

v. 67. See plates I. and II. the same house with and without these old-fashioned decorations.

Wood, water, lawn, in just gradation joins,
 And each with artful negligence combines: 80
 But still in level, or slow-rising ground,
 The wood should always form th' exterior bound;
 Not as a belt, encircling the domain,
 Which the tir'd eye attempts to trace in vain;
 But as a bolder outline to the scene 85
 Than the unbroken turf's smooth even green.
 But if some distant hill o'er all arise,
 And mix its azure colours with the skies;
 Or some near mountain its rough summits shew,
 And bound with broken crags the Alpine view; 90
 Or rise, with even slope and gradual swell,
 Like the broad cone, or wide-extended bell;—
 Never attempt, presumptuous, to o'erspread
 With starv'd plantations its bleak, barren head:
 Nature herself the rash design withstands, 95
 And guards her wilds from innovating hands;
 Which, if successful, only would disgrace
 Her giant limbs with fripp'ry, fringe, and lace.

v. 83. The belt with which Mr. Brown and his followers encircled the scenes of their improvements, is a boundary only in the map. In nature, the highest, and not the most distant parts of the demesnes, are the boundaries to the different stages of distance.

Whatever foremost glitters to the eye,
 Should near the middle of the Landscape lie;— 100
 Such as the stagnant pool, or rippling stream,
 That foams and sparkles in the sun's bright beam;
 Not to attract th' unskilful gazer's sight,
 But to concentrate, and disperse the light;
 To shew the clear reflection of the day, 105
 And dart through hanging trees the refluant ray;
 Where semi-lights with semi-shadows join,
 And quiv'ring play in harmony divine.
 Motion and life the thicket seems to take,
 And then reflect them back upon the lake: 110
 Soft flick'ring tints in every part appear,
 Bright without glare, without distinction clear;
 While the strong lights that in the centre play,

v. 105, &c. These beautiful effects of the sun shining through trees that overhang water, have rarely been attended to by artists; and never attempted to be imitated by any, that I know of, except Claude. The practice of our students in Landscape-painting, in making only slight sketches from nature, and finishing them at home, must effectually prevent their excelling in that art; which consists in the power of imitating colours rather than forms. If they were to make their designs at home, and put in the light and shade and colouring from nature, their course of study would be much more reasonable and profitable.

As more diverged spread a fainter ray,
Till lost in thick'ning shades they die away. 115

Although your waters be of small extent,
And 'midst high banks and shadowy thickets pent,
Look not with envy at the boundless meer,
That spreads o'er miles, from all incumbrance clear;
Nor think the vast Maragnon's rolling tide, 120
When rivers numberless have swell'd his pride,
Displays to heav'n so beautiful a stream,
As the wide-wand'ring Wye, or rapid Team:—
Nor yet expect, where Niagara roars,
And stuns the nations round Ontario's shores, 125
To find such true sublimity display'd,
As in rich Tibur's broken, wild cascade.

Oft have I heard the silly trav'ler boast
The grandeur of Ontario's endless coast;
Where, far as he could dart his wand'ring eye, 130
He nought but boundless water could descry.

With equal reason, Keswick's favour'd pool
Is made the theme of ev'ry wond'ring fool;
With bogs and barrenness here compass'd round,
With square inclosures there, and fallow'd ground; 135
O'er its deep waves no promontories tower,
No lofty trees, high over-arch'd, imbower;

No winding creek or solitary bay,
 'Midst pendant rocks or woods is seen to stray:
 But small prim islands, with blue fir-trees crown'd, 140
 Spread their cold shadows regularly round;
 Whilst over all vast crumbling mountains rise,
 Mean in their forms, though of gigantic size.

Ah! what avails the mountain's dizzy height,
 Or base that far extends beyond the sight; 145
 If flat, dull, shapes behind each other rise,
 And fritter'd outlines cut against the skies?
 'Tis form, not magnitude, adorns the scene;—
 A hillock may be grand, and the vast Andes mean.

But as vain painters, destitute of skill, 150
 Large sheets of canvas with large figures fill,
 And think with shapes gigantic to supply
 Grandeur of form, and grace of symmetry:—
 So the rude gazer ever thinks to find
 The view sublime, where vast and unconfin'd. 155

'Tis not the giant of unwieldy size,
 Piling up hills on hills to scale the skies,
 That gives an image of the true sublime,
 Or the best subject for the lofty rhyme;
 But nature's common works, by genius dress'd, 160
 With art selected, and with taste express'd;

Where sympathy with terror is combin'd,
To move, to melt, and elevate the mind.

Still less, in common objects of the sense,
Can we with symmetry of form dispense:— 165
The lake or river should not be so wide
As not to shew distinctly either side;
Unless remote, in hazy distance seen,
It dimly glimmers through the azure scene:
Nor should the mountain lift so high its head, 170
Or its circumference so widely spread,
As each approaching object to o'erpower,
Shame the high-spreading oak, or lofty tower;
And, by reducing ev'ry feature round,
Poor Lilliput with Brobdignag confound. 175

To shew the nice embellishments of art,
The foreground ever is the properest part;
For e'en minute and trifling objects near,
Will grow important, and distinct appear:
No leaf of fern, low weed, or creeping thorn, 180
But, near the eye, the Landscape may adorn;
Either when tufted o'er the moss-grown stone,
Or down the slope in loose disorder thrown;

v. 180. See plate I. the bank in the foreground.

Or, richly spread along the level green,
It breaks the tints and variegates the scene. 185

But here again, ye rural nymphs, oppose
Nature's and Art's confederated foes!
Break their fell scythes, that would these beauties shave,
And sink their iron rollers in the wave!
Your favourite plants, and native haunts protect, 190
In wild obscurity, and rude neglect;
Or teach proud man his labour to employ
To form and decorate, and not destroy;
Teach him to place, and not remove the stone
On yonder bank, with moss and fern o'ergrown; 195
To cherish, not mow down, the weeds that creep
Along the shore, or overhang the steep;
To break, not level, the slow-rising ground,
And guard, not cut, the fern that shades it round.

The cover'd seat, that shelters from the storm, 200
May oft a feature in the Landscape form;
Whether compos'd of native stumps and roots,
It spreads the creeper's rich fantastic shoots;
Or, rais'd with stones, irregularly pil'd,
It seems some cavern, desolate and wild: 205

v. 188. See plate II. the same bank dressed and levelled in the style of modern taste.

But still of dress and ornament beware ;
 And hide each formal trace of art with care :
 Let clust'ring ivy o'er its sides be spread,
 And moss and weeds grow scatter'd o'er its head.

The stately arch, high-rais'd with massive stone ;
 The pond'rous flag, that forms a bridge alone ; 211
 The prostrate tree, or rudely propt-up beam,
 That leads the path across the foaming stream ;
 May each the scene with diff'rent beauty grace,
 If shewn with judgment in its proper place. 215
 But false refinement vainly strives to please,
 With the thin, fragile bridge of the Chinese ;
 Light and fantastical, yet stiff and prim,
 The child of barren fancy turn'd to whim :
 Whim ! whose extravagancies ever try 220
 The vacancies of fancy to supply :
 And as the coward, when his passions rave,
 Rushes on dangers that appall the brave ;

v. 212. See plate I. In the middle distance, a view of a rustic bridge, taken from one that I have erected.—For the various effects of different arched and flagged bridges, see the *Liber Veritatis* of Claude; in which some of almost every form are introduced, in every kind of situation.

217. See plate II. a Chinese bridge substituted to the preceding rustic one.