

OBSERVATIONS,

RELATIVE CHIEFLY TO

PICTURESQUE BEAUTY,

Made in the YEAR 1772,

On several PARTS of ENGLAND;

PARTICULARLY THE

MOUNTAINS, AND LAKES

O F

CUMBERLAND, AND WESTMORELAND.

V O L. I.

By WILLIAM GILPIN, M. A.

PREBENDARY OF SALISBURY;

A N D

VICAR OF BOLDRE, IN NEW-FOREST, NEAR LYMINGTON.

L O N D O N;

PRINTED FOR R. BLAMIRE, STRAND.

M.DCC.LXXXVI.

These smooth-coated mountains, tho of little estimation in the painter's eye, are however great sources of plenty. They are the nurseries of sheep; which are bred here, and fatted in the vallies.

But the life of a shepherd, in this country, is not an Arcadian life. His occupation subjects him to many difficulties, in the winter especially, when he is often obliged to attend his flock on the bleak side of a mountain, which engages him in many a painful vigil. And when the mountains are covered with snow, which is frequently the case, his employment becomes then a dangerous one. It seldom happens, but that some part of his flock is snowed up; and in preserving their lives, he must often expose his own.

After winding about two miles along the edge of one of these smooth mountains, we dropped at once into a beautiful vale, called the vale of Butmer, the bottom of which was adorned by a lake of the same name.

This

This lake is small; about a mile and a half in length, and half a mile in breadth; of an oblong form; sweeping, at one end, round a woody promontory. But this sweep is rather forced; and from some points makes too acute an angle. It is one of those lines, which would have a better effect from a boat*. A lower point would soften its abruptness. In other parts also the lines of this lake are rather too square. The scenery however about it is grand, and beautiful.

On the western side, a long range of mountainous declivity extends from end to end; falling every where precipitately into the water, at least it had that appearance to the eye: tho on the spot probably a margin of meadow might shoot from the bottom of the mountain, as we observed at Keswick. Of the line, which the summit of this mountain formed, we could not easily judge; as it was in a great measure hid in clouds.

The eastern side of the lake is woody; and contrasts happily with the western. But the wood is of that kind, which is periodically

* See page 95.

cut down, and was not in perfection, when we saw it.

Near the bottom of this lake, is the loftiest cascade we had ever seen. It hardly, I think, falls through a less descent than three or four hundred yards. But it is an object of no beauty; it is barren of accompaniments; and appears, at a distance, like a white ribbon bisecting the mountain. The people of the country, alluding to the whiteness of its foam, call it *four-milk-force*.

The vale of Butermer is rather confined in that part, which the lake occupies. Below, it extends a considerable way: but our route led us first above, in quest of some rocky mountains, which are supposed to be the highest precipices in the country. These scenes, which are known by the name of *Gatesgarthdale*, open at the head of the lake.

Here we found two vallies, formed by a mountain on each side, and one in the middle. The right hand valley was soon closed by a *barrow*: that on the left led directly to the scenes we sought.

The transition here, contrary to the usual process of nature, is abrupt. We had been travelling, all the morning, among mountains

perfectly smooth, and covered with herbage; and now found ourselves suddenly among craggs and rocks, and precipices, as wild, and hideous, as any we had seen.

Gatesgarth-dale, into which we soon entered, is indeed a very tremendous scene. Like all the vallies we had yet found, it had a peculiar character. It's features were it's own. It was not a vista like the valley of Watenlath; nor had it any of the sudden turns of the valley of Borrodale: but it wound slowly, and solemnly in one large segment. It was wider also than either of those vallies; being at least half a quarter of a mile from side to side; which distance it pretty uniformly observed; the rocky mountains, which environed it, keeping their line with great exactness; at least, never breaking out into any violent projections.

The area of this valley is, in general, concave; the sides almost perpendicular, composed of a kind of broken craggy rock, the ruins of which every where strew the valley; and give it still more the idea of desolation.

The



The river also, which runs through it, and is the principal supply of the lake, is as wild as the valley itself. It has no banks, but the fragments of rocks; no bed, but a channel composed of rocky strata, among which the water forces its course. Its channel, as well as its bank, is formed of loose stones, and fragments, which break, and divide the stream into a succession of wild, impetuous eddies.

{ A stream, which is the natural source of plenty, is perhaps when unaccompanied with verdure, the strongest emblem of desolation. It shews the spot to be so barren, that even the greatest source of abundance can produce nothing. The whole valley indeed joined in impressing the same idea. Fruitful nature, making in every part of her ample range, unremitting efforts to vegetate, could not here produce a single germin.

As we proceeded, the grandeur of the valley increased. We had been prepared indeed to see the highest precipices, which the country produced. Such a preface is generally productive of disappointment; but on this occasion it did no injury. The fancy had still its scope. We found the mountains so over-hung with
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clouds,

clouds, that we could form little judgment of their height. Our guide told us, they were twice as high, as we could see: which however we did not believe from the observations we were able to make, as the clouds, at intervals, floated past; and discovered, here and there, the shadowy forms of the rocky summits. A great height however they certainly were; and the darkness, in which they were wrapped, gave us a new illustration of the grandeur of those ideas, which arise from obscurity. “ Dark, confused, uncertain images, Mr. Burk very justly observes, have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions, than those, which are more clear, and determinate. For hardly any thing can strike the mind with it’s greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity; which nothing can do, whilst we are able to perceive it’s bounds: but to see an object distinctly, and to perceive it’s bounds, is one, and the same thing. A clear idea therefore is another name for a little idea*.”

* On the sublime, and beautiful. Part II. Sect. IV.

The middle of the valley is adorned, as these vallies, in some part, often are, by a craggy hill; on the top of which stands the fragment of a rock; that looks, in Ossian's language, like the *stone of power*—the rude deity of desolation, to which the scene is sacred.

This valley is not more than six miles from the black-lead mines; and would have led us to them, if we had pursued it's course.

Having travelled about three miles in this dreary scene; and having taken such a view, as we could obtain, of the bold inclosures, which contained it; we returned by the same rout we came, threading the valley, and skirting the lake along it's eastern coast, till we arrived at the bottom of it. Here we fell into a country very different from that we had left.

The vale of Butermer, which extends many miles below the lake, is a wide, variegated scene, full of rising and falling ground; woody
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in many parts ; well inhabited in some ; fruitful, and luxuriant in all.

Here we found a village, where we made a luxurious repast, as usual, on eggs and milk ; and met, in the chearful and healthy looks of the inhabitants, new proofs of the narrow limits, in which all the real wants of life are comprized.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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S E C O N D E D I T I O N .

V O L, II.

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L O N D O N;

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M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

OBSERVATIONS

ON

Several PARTS of ENGLAND,

ESPECIALLY

The LAKES, &c.

SECTION XVI.

HAVING refreshed ourselves, and our horses, after a fatiguing morning, we proceeded along the vale of Butterm; and following the course of the river, as far as the inequalities of the ground would admit, we soon came to another lake, still more beautiful, than that we had left above. The two lakes bear a great resemblance to each other. Both are oblong: both wind

round promontories ; and both are surrounded by mountains. But the lower lake is near a mile longer, than the upper ; the lines it forms are much easier ; and tho it has less wood on it's banks, the loss is compensated by a richer display of rocky scenery. The forms of these rocks are in general, beautiful ; most of them being broken into grand square surfaces. This species, as we have already observed*, are in a greater style, than the cragg, which is shattered into more diminutive parts.

With this rocky scenery much hilly ground is intermixed. Patches of meadow also, here and there, on the banks of the lake, improve the variety. Nothing is wanting but a little more wood, to make this lake, and the vale in which it lies, a very enchanting scene ; or rather a succession of enchanting scenes : for the hills, and rising grounds, into which it every where swells, acting in due subordination to the grand mountains, which environ the whole vale, break and separate the area of it into smaller parts. Many of these form

* See page, 108.

themselves into little vallies, and other recesses, which are very picturesque.

Not far from the lake the mountain of Grafmer appears rising above all the mountains in it's neighbourhood. A lake of this name we had already seen in our road between Ambleside, and Kefwick; but there is no connection between the lake, and the mountain.

This mountain forms rather a vast ridge, than a pointed summit: and is connected with two or three other mountains of inferior dignity: itself is said to be equal to Skiddaw; which is the common gage of altitude through the whole country; and therefore may be supposed the highest. No mountain aspires to be higher than Skiddaw: some boast an equal height: but two or three only have real pretensions.

Grafmer, and the mountains in it's neighbourhood, form the eastern boundary of the vale, which we now traversed; a vale at least five miles in length, and one third of that space in breadth. Our road carried us near

the village of Brackenthwait, which lies at the bottom of Grafmer.

Here we had an account of an inundation occasioned by the bursting of a water-spout. The particulars, which are well authenticated, are curious. But it will be necessary first to exhibit the geography of the mountain.

In that part, where Grafmer is connected with the other high lands in it's neighbourhood, three little streams take their origin; of which the Liffa is the least inconsiderable. The course of this stream down the mountain is very steep, and about a mile in length. It's bed, which is a deep *gully*, and the sides of the mountain all around, are profusely spread with loose stones, and gravel. On leaving the mountain, the Liffa divides the vale, through which we now passed; and, after a course of four or five miles, joins the Cocker.

On the 9th of September 1760, about midnight, the water-spout fell upon Grafmer, nearly, as was conjectured, where the three little streams, just mentioned, issue from their fountains.

At

At first it swept the whole side of the mountain, and charging itself with all the rubbish it found there, made it's way into the vale, following chiefly the direction of the Liffa. At the foot of the mountain it was received by a piece of arable ground; on which it's violence first broke. Here it tore away trees, soil, and gravel; and laid all bare, many feet in depth, to the naked rock. Over the next ten acres it seems to have made an immense roll; covering them with so vast a bed of stones; that no human art can ever again restore the soil.

When we saw the place, tho twelve years after the event, many marks remained, still flagrant, of this scene of ruin. We saw the natural bed of the Liffa, a mere contracted rivulet; and on it's banks the vestiges of a stony channel, spreading far and wide, almost enough to contain the waters of the Rhine, or the Danube. It was computed from the flood-marks, that in many parts the stream must have been five or six yards deep; and near a hundred broad; and if it's great velocity be added to this weight of water, it's force will be found equal to almost any effect.

On the banks of this stony channel, we saw a few scattered houses, a part of the village of Brackenthwait, which had a wonderful escape. They stood at the bottom of Grafmer, rather on a rising ground; and the current, taking its first direction towards them, would have undermined them in a few moments, (for the soil was instantly laid bare) had not a projection of native rock, the interior stratum, on which the houses had unknowingly been founded, resisted the current, and given it a new direction. Unless this had intervened, it is probable, these houses, and all the inhabitants of them (so instantaneous was the ruin) had been swept away together.

In passing farther along the vale, we saw other marks of the fury of the inundation; where, bridges had been thrown down, houses carried off, and woods rooted up. But its effects upon a stone-causeway were thought the most surprizing. This fabric was of great thickness; and supported on each side by an enormous bank of earth. The memory of man could trace it, unaltered in any particular, near a hundred years: but by the soundness and firmness of its parts and texture, it seemed

as if it had stood for ages. It was almost a doubt, whether it were a work of nature, or of art. This massy mole the deluge not only carried off; but, as if it turned it into sport, made it's very foundations the channel of it's own stream.

Having done all this mischief, not only here, but in many other parts, the Liffa threw all it's waters into the Cocker, where an end was put to it's devastation: for tho' the Cocker was unable to contain so immense an increase; yet as it flows through a more level country, the deluge spread far and wide, and wasted it's strength in one vast, stagnant inundation.

Having passed through the vale of Butermer, we entered another beautiful scene, the vale of Lorton.

This vale, like all the past, presents us with a landscape, intirely new. No lakes, no rocks are here, to blend the ideas of dignity, and grandeur with that of beauty. All is simplicity, and repose. Nature, in this scene, lays totally aside her majestic frown, and wears only a lovely smile.

The vale of Lorton is of the extended kind, running a considerable way between mountains, which range at about a mile's distance. They are near enough to screen it from the storm; and yet not so impending as to exclude the sun. Their sides, tho' not smooth, are not much diversified. A few knolls and hollows just give a little variety to the broad lights and shades, which overspread them.

This vale, which enjoys a rich soil, is in general a rural, cultivated scene; tho' in many parts the ground is beautifully broken, and abrupt. A bright stream, which might almost take the name of a river, pours along a rocky channel; and sparkles down numberless little cascades. It's banks are adorned with wood; and varied with different objects; a bridge; a mill; a hamlet; a glade overhung with wood; or some little sweet recess; or natural vista, through which the eye ranges, between irregular trees, along the windings of the stream.

• Except the mountains, nothing in all this scenery is *great*; but every part is filled with those sweet engaging passages of nature, which
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tend to sooth the mind, and instill tranquillity.

—————The passions to divine repose
 Persuaded yield: and love and joy alone
 Are waking: love and joy, such as await
 An angel's meditation—————

Scenes of this kind, (however pleasing) in which few objects occur, either of *grandeur* or *peculiarity*, in a singular manner elude the powers of verbal description. They almost elude the power of colours. The soft and elegant form of beauty is hard to hit: while the strong, harsh feature is a mark, which every pencil can strike.

But tho a *peculiar* difficulty attends the verbal description of these mild, and quiet haunts of Nature; yet undoubtedly *all* her scenery is ill-attempted in language.

Mountains, rocks, broken ground, water, and wood, are the simple materials, which she employs in all her beautiful pictures: but the variety and harmony, with which she employs them are infinite. In description these words stand only for *general ideas*: on her charts each is *detailed* into a thousand varied