



THE ARTIST.

THE ARTIST.

AND what is genius?—'Tis a ray of Heaven,
 Illuming dim mortality; a gleam
 That flashes on our gloominess by fits,
 Like summer lightnings, which, in radiant lines,
 Inwreath the midnight clouds with tints divine;
 It gilds Imagination's darkest scenes
 With splendid glory, like those meteor gems
 That spread their richness o'er the polar skies.
 O, 'tis a straggling sunbeam, through the storm,
 Flung on the cluster'd diamond, which reflects,
 In burning brilliancy, the borrow'd blaze:
 It is the morning light, outpouring all
 Its flood of splendour on the bloomy bowers
 Of God's own Paradise!
 Though hapless oft
 His fate, how bless'd the ARTIST who beholds,

With mind inspir'd and genius-brighten'd eye,
Those beauties which eternally shine forth,
Nature, in all thy works ! To him, high wrapp'd
In passion'd fancies, feelings so allied
To something heavenly, that to all on earth
They give their own rich tinting. What delight
The morning landscape yields; when the young sun
Flings o'er the mountain his first bickering ray,
And tips with wavering gold the embattled tower;
When the first rosy gleam the waters catch,
Like smiling babe just waking from soft sleep
On its fond mother's bosom; while the woods,
That ring with bird-notes sweet, are dimly wrapp'd
In mistiness and shade. What joy is his,
Amid the forest depths to wander on,
O'er flower-empurpled path, and list the tones
Of the deep waterfall, at silent noon,
Drowning the woodlark's song; and, then, to view
Its angry flood, headlong from rock to rock,
Leaping in thund'rous rush, with silvery arch,—
Melodiously sublime! while o'er its mists,
That to the sun a mimic rainbow spread,
The guardian oaks bend lovingly their arms,
And drink the pearly moisture: in their shade

The lily blossoms on its mossy bank,
And through their boughs wildly the summer breeze,
An ever-wandering harper, sings unheard.

And, oh! how sweet to him the sunset hour,
When, high amid the evening's glowing pomp
That light the west, the mountain lifts its head,—
A rich empurpled pillow for the God
Of Day to rest on, as he, like a king
In coronation splendour, gaily bids
His worshippers farewell, ere he retires
With Ocean's potentates, his rosy wine
To quaff amid their gem-wrought banquet bowers;
Then on the painter's ear the hymn of love
Falls in full harmony;—the lake outspreads,
With all a brother artist's beauteous skill,
Another landscape to his ravish'd eye,
Gorgeous with radiant colouring; deep the groves
Are cast into the shade, where flocks and herds
Are wandering homeward to the tinkling sound
Of their own tuneful bells, and pastoral reed
And song of milkmaid fill up every pause
In Nature's vesper anthem, while the spire
And sun-gilt tower glow with the day's last beam.

To him what grand sublimity appears
In the vast ocean, with its cloud-wreathed cliffs,
Rocks, shores, and isles, and vessels wind-caress'd,
Sheeted in glittering sunshine, or enwrapp'd
In all the tempest's dark magnificence!
And, oh! to him, how sweet, when copying all
The coy bewitching charms of moonlight eve!
Then the rich woods voluptuously their gold
Fling loose t' th' wanton winds, whose amorous song
Is heard amid their inmost bowers, where rests
The love-talking nightingale, discoursing sweet
To her patroness, the radiant queen of Heaven.
Then, bathed in dew, the full-blown roses fling
Their odours all abroad, and jasmine flowers
And rich carnation buds their honey-cups
With nectar fill, and to the night-breeze yield,
Like virgin bride, their richest treasur'd sweets;
While flow the streams in silver, and the towers
Of time-worn castles, and dismantled aisles,
Of pillar'd abbeys, break the shadowy mass,
With beamy outline, of the deep obscure.

'Tis not the soft and beautiful alone
The youthful painter loves to imitate:

The strife of arms is his—the battle-field,
Where rings the stormy trumpet, is the scene
Where oft he pants to win immortal fame;
Great as the hero who, with spear-riven arms,
Mows down with his red brand whole ranks of foes;
While chariot-wheels and war-steed's iron hoof
Trample the dead and dying in the dust.
Deeds, too, of holy history often fill
His waking dreams, till his wide canvass glows
With characters divine—with wond'rous acts,
Miraculous, of Him who lived and died
To save a guilty world.

But, oh! what toils,
What studies, night and day,—what hopes, what
prayers,
What aspirations, what ecstatic thoughts,
And wild imaginings of fancy bright,
Are his, as up the weary steep he climbs
To win renown,—to win that glory which
Must only shine upon his early grave!
Oh! he had hop'd to gain renown as great
As that which to Italia's sons belong;
To blend his name with Raffaele, Angelo,

Parmeggiano, Titian, and Vandyke ;
Hop'd that the radiant tints would all be his
Of Rubens,—his that painter's grand effects,
Combin'd with every excellence that graced
Albano's sweetness and Corregio's taste.
Alas ! ill-fated artist, thy proud hopes
Were, like the bard's, to disappointment doomed !
Thy expectations all cut off—thyself
Left in thy prime to wither, like the bud,—
The flower-bud rich of promise, by the frost
Cut off untimely ! With thy beauteous tints
Thy tears were mingled oft ; the dart of Death
At length, in pity, smote thy burden'd heart,
And gave thee freedom : dying, thou didst think,—
Painfully think, of what thou mightst have been,
Had fortune on thy opening merit smil'd,—
Then slept to wake in bliss !

And now mankind,
In generous mockery, pay that tribute due
To thy transcendant talents, and the grave
That hides thy cold remains with laurels deck !

J. F. P.