

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06692-1 - Observations on the Western Parts of England, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty: To Which are Added, a Few Remarks on the Picturesque Beauties of the Isle of Wight

William Gilpin

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Observations on the Western Parts of England, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty

Clergyman, schoolmaster and writer on aesthetics, William Gilpin (1724–1804) is best known for his works on the picturesque. In his *Essay on Prints*, published in 1768 and reissued in this series, he defined picturesque as ‘a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a picture’. First published in 1798, the present work is one of a series which records his reflections on the picturesque across British landscapes. It traces the journey he made, equipped with notebook and sketching materials, westwards from Wiltshire through Somerset and Devon to Cornwall, returning via Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. He describes his impressions of famous landmarks such as Stonehenge, Glastonbury Abbey, the River Tamar and Carisbrooke Castle, and includes several evocative reproductions of his pen-and-wash drawings. The companion volumes of *Observations* on other parts of Britain are also reissued in the Cambridge Library Collection.

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RELATIVE CHIEFLY TO
PICTURESQUE BEAUTY.
TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
*A FEW REMARKS ON THE PICTURESQUE BEAUTIES
OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT.*

By WILLIAM GILPIN, M. A.
PREBENDARY OF SALISBURY; AND VICAR OF BOLDRE IN
NEW FOREST, NEAR LYMINGTON.

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
HENRY ADDINGTON,
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH your inquiries and pursuits have always been of a much higher nature than the subject of these papers, yet I take the liberty of presenting them to you, as I am persuaded you do not disapprove in others, what the rigid economy of your own time will not suffer you to pursue with much attention yourself.

My book would gladly, however, still offer itself to your notice, from some little personal affinity. It describes a country, through which you

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have

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have often travelled; and in which your property chiefly lies.

But if this plea have less weight, it hath one more, from which it hath a better hope of procuring a favourable reception. The profits of it are intended to lay the foundation of a little fund, which you, my dear Sir, and a few other kind friends, have obligingly engaged to countenance at some future period.

As to the book itself, it has lain by me these twenty years, in which time it ought to have gained—and I hope it has gained—some little advantage. One advantage is, that I have had opportunities of adorning several of the scenes it describes, with contrasts taken from other countries, which have occasionally fallen in my way. It was always a particular amusement to myself,

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self, and I hope it may be also to others, to see how *variously* Nature works up the *same modes* of scenery, in different parts of the world.

At the same time, so long a date hath occasioned some little anachronisms. I met with a few improvements in different places, of later date than the body of the work itself. These indeed I might have inserted in notes; but I thought the occasion did not require much chronological exactness, and therefore blended them with the text.

After all, my dear Sir, to tell you the plain truth, in my address to you, I consider my book only as a vehicle. The fact is, I had the vanity to wish it known, that I could call one of the most amiable and respectable men I am acquainted with, my friend: and I hope you will excuse my not commu-

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nicating

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nicating to you this piece of vanity, as I had determined to indulge what I feared you might wish to repress.

I beg, dear Sir, you will believe me to be, with the truest esteem, respect, and affection,

Your most obedient, and

obliged humble servant,

WILL. GILPIN.

VICAR'S-HILL,
April 23, 1798.

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