

**PRINCIPLE
IN ART, ETC.**

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Principle in art, etc. by Coventry Patmore

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COVENTRY PATMORE

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ETC.

BY

COVENTRY PATMORE

NEW EDITION

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GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET
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PREFACE

THE large majority of these Essays were printed in the *St. James's Gazette* during the editorship of Mr. Greenwood. The Essay on "Architectural Styles" contains a summary of principles which were stated, some thirty years ago, in various articles, chiefly in the *Edinburgh Review*.

In the original issue the author had noted that "thoughts had sometimes been repeated, almost in the same words." In the rearrangement here adopted no attempt has been made to obviate this repetition, which may be even more conspicuous than in the original order; but, "as these thoughts are mostly unfamiliar

and significant, readers will be none the worse for encountering them twice, or even thrice."

Shortly before his death, Mr. Patmore had suggested a rearrangement for a new issue, which has been adopted and completed for this edition. A few corrections and omissions have also been made, the greater number of which were either marked or sanctioned by the author himself. The alterations not actually his own are few and of small importance.

Some obvious mistakes in matters of fact, and some errors of punctuation, have been corrected; here and there a word has been transposed where the original order was imperfect; and one or two passages which seemed to have been written for an immediate purpose rather than for more permanent effect have been omitted.

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I

PRINCIPLE IN ART

It is not true, though it has so often been asserted, that criticism is of no use or of little use to art. This notion prevails so widely only because—among us at least—criticism has not been criticism. To criticise is to judge; to judge requires judicial qualification; and this is quite a different thing from a natural sensitiveness to beauty, however much that sensitiveness may have become heightened by converse with refined and beautiful objects of nature and works of art. "Criticism," which has been the outcome only of such sensitiveness and such converse, may be, and often is, delightful reading, and is naturally far more popular than criticism which is truly judicial. The pseudo-criticism, of which we have had such floods during the past half-century, delights by sympathy with, and perhaps expansion of, our own sensations;

true criticism appeals to the intellect, and rebukes the reader as often as it does the artist for his ignorance and his mistakes. Such criticism may not be able to produce good art; but bad art collapses at the contact of its breath, as the steam in the cylinder of an engine collapses on each admission of the spray of cold water; and thus, although good criticism cannot produce art, it removes endless hindrances to its production, and tends to provide art with its chief motive-power, a public prepared to acknowledge it. The enunciation of a single principle has sometimes, almost at a blow, revolutionised not only the technical practice of an art, but the popular taste with regard to it. Strawberry Hill Gothic vanished like a nightmare when Pugin for the first time authoritatively asserted and proved that architectural decoration could never properly be an addition to constructive features, but only a fashioning of them. The truth was manifest at once to amateur as well as to architect; and this one principle proves to have contained a power even of popular culture far greater than all the splendid "sympathetic" criticism which followed during the next fifty years. And it has done nothing but good, whereas the latter kind of writing, together with much good, has done much harm. Pugin's insight did not enable him to discover the almost equally