

ZANONI

BY

THE RIGHT HON. LORD LYTTON

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Dedicatory Epistle.

First Prefixed to the Edition of 1845.

TO

JOHN GIBSON, R.A.,

SCULPTOR.

IN looking round the wide and luminous circle of our great living Englishmen, to select one to whom I might fitly dedicate this work,—one who, in his life as in his genius, might illustrate the principle I have sought to convey;—elevated by the ideal which he exalts and serenely dwelling in a glorious existence with the images born of his imagination,—in looking round for some such man, my thoughts rested upon you. Afar from our turbulent cabals—from the ignoble jealousy and the sordid strife which degrade and acerbate the ambition of Genius,—in your Roman Home, you have lived amidst all that is loveliest and least perishable in the Past, and contributed, with the noblest aims, and in the purest spirit, to the mighty heirlooms of the Future. Your youth has been devoted to toil that your manhood may be consecrated to fame;—a fame unsullied by one desire of gold. You have escaped the two worst perils that beset the Artist in our time and land—the debasing tendencies of Commerce, and the angry rivalries of Competition. You have not wrought your marble for the market—you have not been tempted by the praises which our vicious criticism has showered upon exaggeration and distortion, to lower your taste to the level

of the Hour; you have lived, and you have laboured, as if you had no rivals, but in the Dead—no purchasers, save in judges of what is best. In the divine Priesthood of the Beautiful, you have sought only to increase her worshippers and enrich her temples. The pupil of Canova, you have inherited his excellences, while you have shunned his errors:—yours his delicacy, not his affectation. Your heart resembles him even more than your genius—you have the same noble enthusiasm for your sublime profession—the same lofty freedom from envy and the spirit that depreciates—the same generous desire not to war with, but to serve, Artists in your art; aiding, strengthening, advising, elevating the timidity of inexperience, and the vague aspirations of youth. By the intuition of a kindred mind, you have equalled the learning of Winckleman, and the plastic poetry of Goethe, in the intimate comprehension of the Antique. Each work of yours, rightly studied, is in itself a *criticism*, illustrating the sublime secrets of the Grecian Art, which, without the servility of plagiarism, you have contributed to revive among us; in you we behold its three great and long undetected principles,—simplicity, calm, and concentration.

But your admiration of the Greeks has not led you to the bigotry of the mere Antiquarian, or made you less sensible of the unappreciated excellence of the mighty Modern, worthy to be your countryman,—though till his statue is in the streets of our capital, we show ourselves not worthy of the glory he has shed upon our land: you have not suffered even your gratitude to Canova to blind you to the superiority of Flaxman. When we become sensible of our title-deeds to renown in that single name we may look for an English public capable of real patronage to English Art,—and not till then.

I, Artist in words, dedicate, then, to you, Artist, whose ideas speak in marble, this well-loved work of my matured manhood. I love it not the less because it has been little understood, and superficially judged by the common herd.

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It was not meant for them. I love it not the more, because it has found enthusiastic favourers amongst the Few. My affection for my work is rooted in the solemn and pure delight which it gave me to conceive and to perform. If I had graven it on the rocks of a desert, this apparition of my own innermost mind, in its least clouded moments, would have been to me as dear: And this ought, I believe, to be the sentiment with which He whose Art is born of faith in the truth and beauty of the principles he seeks to illustrate, should regard his work. Your serener existence, uniform and holy, my lot denies—if my heart covets. But our true nature is in our thoughts, not our deeds: and therefore, in Books which *are* his Thoughts—the Author's character lies bare to the discerning eye. It is not in the life of cities—in the turmoil and the crowd; it is in the still, the lonely, and more sacred life, which, for some hours, under every sun—the student lives—(his stolen retreat from the Agora to the Cave), that I feel there is between us the bond of that secret sympathy, that magnetic chain—which unites the Everlasting Brotherhood, of whose being Zanoni is the type.

E. B. L.

LONDON, *May*, 1845.

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