THE NEW PASTORAL

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The New Pastoral by Thomas Buchanan Read

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THOMAS BUCHANAN READ

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Trieste

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BY

THOMAS BUCHANAN READ.

NEW EDITION—REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.

PHILADELPHIA:
PARRY & M'MILLAN,
SUCCESSORS TO A. HART.
1856.

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PHILADELPHIA:
STEREOTYPED BY GEORGE CHARLES.
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TO

A GROUP OF GENEROUS FRIENDS

IN PHILADELPHIA,

WITHOUT WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT

THESE PAGES MIGHT NEVER HAVE BEEN WRITTEN,

THIS VOLUME, WITH GRATEFUL FEELINGS,

IS DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

Florence, August 5th, 1854.

INTRODUCTION.

If from this oaten pipe—
Plucked from the shadow of primeval woods,
And waked to changeful numbers by strange airs,
Born by my native stream, in leafy depths
Of unfrequented glades—somewhat of song
Pour through its simple stops, and wake again
In other hearts what I have felt in mine,
Then not in vain I hold it to my lips,
And breathe the fulness of my soul away.
My theme, the country—worthier theme is not
In all the tomes which star the centuries,
From blind Mæonides to Milton blind!
Oh! would that I, with all my living sight,
Might see the least of what their blank orbs saw;
And seeing, wake but once their kindling note,
And, unappalled, attempt their solemn bass;
Then would the song behind the argument
Halt at less distance. As it is, I sing,

Conscious of the disparity, and tremble,—
As who might not? But what mine eyes have seen,
Ears heard, heart felt, my muse shall teach in numbers;
Not with a bondmaid's hand, but housewife's care,
Who holds chaste plenty better than rich waste.
And not of wars terrestrial or of heaven,
Or of a hero, whose great name, ablaze
With glory, lights the annals of an era,
My pipe proclaims; but of that pastoral phase,
Where man is native to his sphere, which shows
The simple light of nature, fresh from God!—
That middle life, between the hut and palace,
'Twixt squalid ignorance and splendid vice;—
Above, by many roods of moral moves,
The Indian's want, and happily below—
If the superior may be called below—
The purple and fine linen;—the broad plain,
Where rests the base of our protecting walls,
Where many labour, though but few take note,
And prop the world, as pillars prop a dome.
Of trial and of triumph is my song,
Of maidens fair and matronhood sublime,
Of iron men who build the golden future,—
Heroic wills, by which the fugest oak
Is broken like a sapling; and to which
The wilderness, the rank and noxious swamps,
Inhospitable hills, renouncing all
The incumbrances of ages, bow and bear
The burthen of the harvest.—This my song.
Scorn not the muse, because mid scenes like these
She loves to wander; and, with calm delight,
Prefers to dwell among the rustic homes,
Where sweet Content, beside the well-swept hearth,
Sits like an angel, and will not depart.

To this the plush and curtains of the proud,
The stucco and thin gilding of the town—
In halls where Luxury, excited, sees
A thousand repetitions of herself
Caught into shadowy corridors, afar,
Of glass in glass interminably lost—
Were cold and naked as the winter-shed,
Through which the snow falls filtered to the floor,
Piling the cheerless drift. Let me but look
On Nature through the tranquil change of day—
The common shade and sunshine—and on life
Which, unambitious, seeks no other hues
To show her fair, or hide deformities.
Ye who would seek for aught, beside such light
And beauty as are found in summer fields,—
For theories new, where splendid errours shine,
And charm like syrens, while they drown the soul,—
For aught of song which, covertly, dispreads
The seeds which shall breed poison in the dews,
And round the foot of our great sheltering Tree,
Give root to vines, with odours breathing bane,—
For any mystery deeper than which lies
Between the bounds of human wo and bliss,—
May close these harmless pages and pass on:
The truths I seek lie round us in the sun.
There are whom neither sun nor shade delights—
One warming not, the other is not grateful;
Who rest so deeply dungeoned in themselves,
No sound can waken, and no light attract; 1
Who lay approving hands on Nature's head,
Too wise to sit, recipient, at her feet:
The applause of such lies not within the pale
Of my ambition. Though my song may be
The transient music of a spring-time runnel,