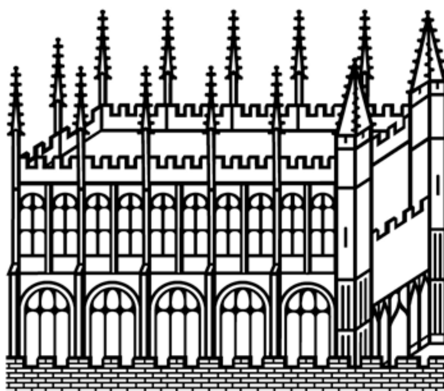

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PIECES ON SCULPTURE,

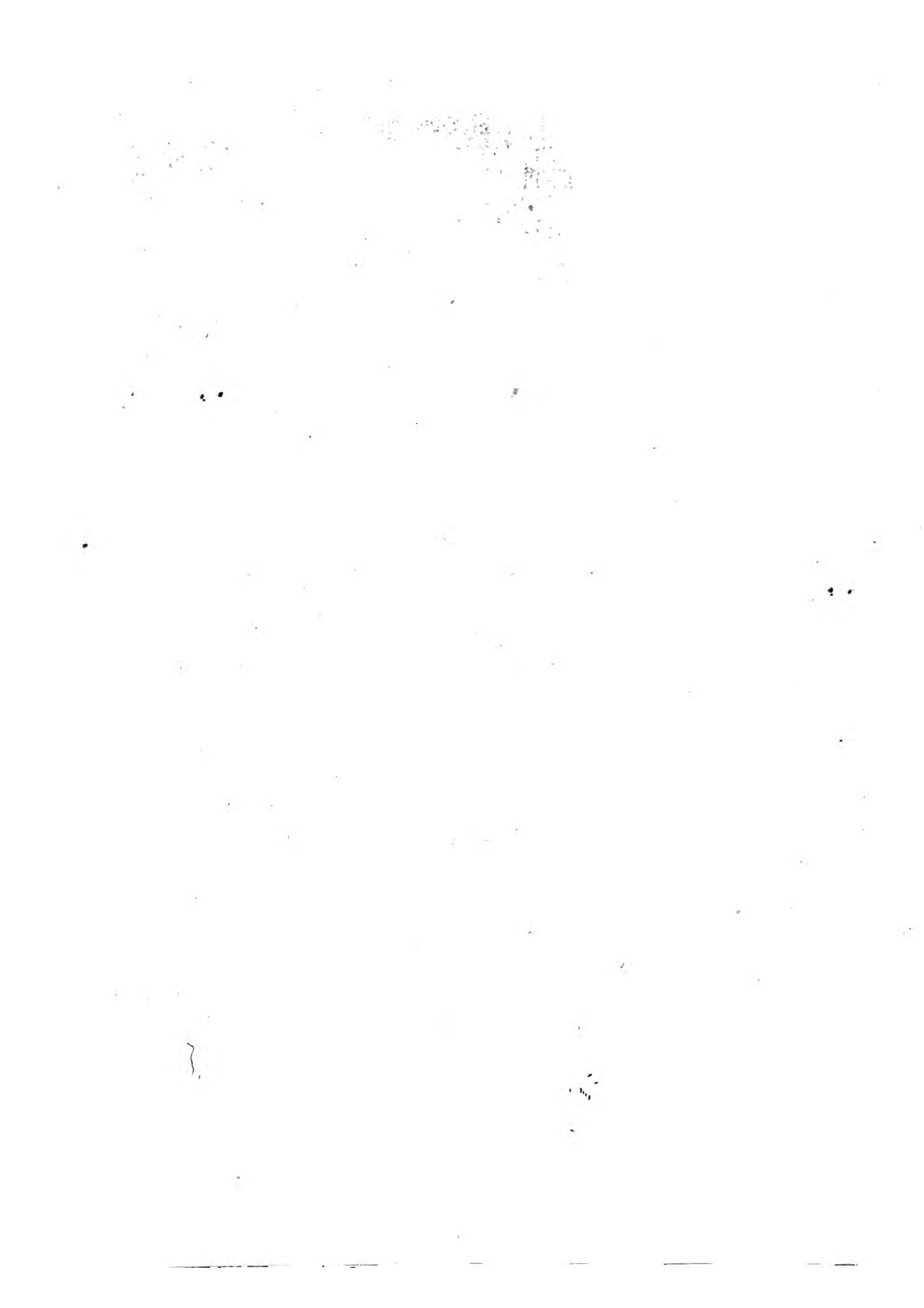
AND ON THE

STATUE OF PETER THE GREAT,

BY

M. *FALCONET* AND M. *DIDEROT*.

TRANSLATED by the Rev. Mr. TOOKE.



PIECES

WRITTEN BY

Monf. FALCONET, and Monf. DIDEROT,

ON

SCULPTURE IN GENERAL,

AND PARTICULARLY ON

The CELEBRATED STATUE of

PETER THE GREAT,

NOW FINISHING BY THE FORMER

At St. PETERSBURG.

Tranflated from the FRENCH, with feveral ADDITIONS,

By WILLIAM TOOKE, Chaplain to the Factory at *St. Peterfburg*;

And illuftrated by an elegant PLATE of the STATUE.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. BOWYER AND J. NICHOLS.

MDCCLXXVII.

To Mr. John Nichols, in London.

SIR,

St. Peterſburg,
Sept. 5, O. S. 1776.

THE only reaſon in the world why I mention myſelf in the title-page to the few pieces I ſend you herewith for publication, is, to inform thoſe who read them, that the tranſlator is neither Sculptor nor Painter: A ſort of hint, that mercy may be worſe beſtowed, than in forgiving him the caſual uſe of any improper term in either of thoſe arts. It is very difficult to tranſlate a ſubject whoſe technical expreſſions we are not verſed in. It is more difficult in my ſituation; as there is no Engliſh artiſt in this country to whom I could have applied for information. This circumſtance, when known, might of itſelf have precluded all apology. I have done my beſt; and, for my friend M. Falconet's ſake, I wiſh any one that could have done it better had undertaken it. But, as it is, I muſt be anſwerable for every impropriety of the above-mentioned kind. I ſee no alternative: therefore, ye gentlemen Reviewers, be as pitiful as ye can; and then, *In me convertite ferrum*;—*mea fraus omnis.*

A deſire of introducing one's friend into company, where we are confident, from the experience we have had of his talent at inſtruction and amuſement, that he will be well received, cannot be unworthy of any. It is what we owe to friendſhip and ſociety.—This at preſent is my endeavour; and, if I fail in the attempt, go on with the above quotation, and ſay of me: *Tantum infelicem nimium dilexit amicum.*

I ſhall here ſay nothing of M. Falconet as an artiſt. I am not conſcious of any conſiderable powers at panegyric; and come to introduce him, not to praiſe him. His works will do that for him, as long as renown can live, after he and his tranſlator are mouldered into duſt.

As a writer, I ſhall only take notice, that theſe are the leaſt conſiderable of his works. The man capable of being one of the firſt Sculptors of his age, if he had employed his genius that way, would have become one of the fineſt writers. How much he is of a ſcholar, every one is ſenſible that has read the pieces he has already publiſhed. His notes on the elder Pliny are ſagacious and acute; and his remarks on the Statue of Marcus Aurelius will remain a literary monument of his taſte. The ſecond edition of them all together, printed at the Hague, is nearly ſold off.

The alterations and improvements, which M. Falconet has made in his book ſince its firſt publication, have rendered it rather a new work than a correction of the former. He intends reprinting it ſo ſoon as his labours at St. Peterſburg ſhall be completed, and himſelf afforded that leiſure ſo neceſſary to an author honeſtly and heartily inclined to ſearch for ſuch imperfections as may have eſcaped his attention hitherto. His deſire is to make it anſwerable to his abilities, which he is perſuaded that it is not at preſent.

What he has written on Pliny, on Marcus Aurelius, &c. &c. is at preſent comprized in two volumes in octavo; and he has additional matter in MS. amply ſufficient for a third volume. He tells me, that he finds his ſubjects more and more abundant; and that he cannot anſwer for it, that the number or bulk of his volumes will not continue to increaſe.

For *Bas-relief* in the original, I had kept the Italian *Baſſo-relievo*, as you will ſee by the MS. When I had finiſhed all but the laſt page, I ſaw that Lord Shafteſbury uſes *Low-relieves:* thinking this authority ſufficient for me, I altered it accordingly throughout; being never inclined to prefer an *outlandiſh* word to one of the ſame import in our own language.

DEAR SIR,

I am your faithful friend,

W. T.

From,

From, "*Curſory Remarks made in a Tour through ſome of the*
"*Northern parts of Europe*, &c. &c. by N. Wraxall, Junior,
"1775." p. 229, 230, 231.

"*One of the nobleſt monuments of the gratitude and veneration*
"*univerſally paid to* PETER THE FIRST, *is that which her preſent*
"*majeſty has ordered to be erected. It is an equeſtrian ſtatue,*
"*and has been ſome years under the hands of Monſieur Falconet.*
"*I was introduced to this great ſtatuary only a few days ago, and*
"*had the pleaſure to ſee the model, which is already completed. In*
"*this production he has united the greateſt ſimplicity with the trueſt*
"*ſublimity of conception. No other ſtatue, whether ancient or*
"*modern, gave him the deſign, which is ſingular in its kind, and is*
"*admirably adapted to expreſs the character of the man, and the*
"*nation over which he reigned. Inſtead of a pedeſtal adorned*
"*with inſcriptions, or ſurrounded by ſlaves, he appears mounted on*
"*a rock or ſtone of a prodigious ſize, up the aſcent of which the*
"*horſe labours, and appears to have reached nearly its ſummit. This*
"*attitude has given him room to exert great anatomical beauty*
"*and ſkill in the muſcles of the horſe's hind thighs and hams, on*
"*which the whole weight of his body is neceſſarily ſuſtained. The*
"*Tzar's figure is full of fire and ſpirit: he ſits on a bear's ſkin, and*
"*is clad in a ſimple habit, not characteriſtic of any particular*
"*country, but ſuch as may be worn, without violation of propriety,*
"*by an inhabitant of any. His eye is directed to ſome apparently*
"*diſtant object, deſigned to be the citadel; and on his features are*
"*moſt ſtrongly impreſſed the ſentiment of* deliberation and public
"care*: *his left hand holds the bridle, and his right is extended, as*
"*the artiſt himſelf expreſſed it,* en pere et en maître.——"

* The head of the hero is the entire workmanſhip of a young lady, in whom the moſt maſculine genius is united to every female grace and delicacy. Mademoiſelle Collot has alſo executed a beautiful buſt in marble of her preſent Majeſty, of his Imperial Highneſs, of the late Grand Dutcheſs, and of Prince Orloff. Her medallion of the late lady Cathcart is inferior to none of them; this his lordſhip took home with him, for the purpoſe of affixing it to the ſepulchral monument to be erected to her memory. *Tranſlator.*

It might ſeem ungenerous to point out the hallucinations and inaccuracies with which this work abounds, after making the above quotation from it. At the ſame time honeſty demands and juſtifies the notification of them, which the truth of the extract might otherwiſe conceal. One thing, however, in its favour: The title of the book is *Curſory Remarks*; and the epithet is exactly fitted to the remarks, ſo far as they concern St. Peterſburg.—To expect more of a book than it promiſes, would be the ſame thing as to pay for ſmall beer, and to require ſtrong. It is out of the way of common juſtice.

REFLEXIONS on SCULPTURE:

In a Speech delivered at the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture at Paris, the 7th of June, 1760.

By STEPHEN FALCONET.

GENTLEMEN,

NO one is more attentive to the admonitions of the Academy than I am. Artifts have often been encouraged to communicate here the reflexions they might make on our arts. It has alfo been fometimes faid, that an artift fhould not fpeak but with the pencil or chiffel in his hand, leaving to enlightened admirers the tafk of difcourfing on our talents.

Now, though I am very much of the latter opinion, I have one motive which determines me not to conform to it at prefent. I have been afked for fome reflexions on Sculpture*; which I think it my duty not to give to the world till they have been fubmitted to your judgment.

I am indebted for them partly to the leffons of my mafter M. Le Moyne; and if, among the reft, I fhould prefent fome that ftand in need of correction, to what tribunal more juft and more enlightened can I fubmit them? It is to him that I fhould principally look for the correction of my miftakes.

* For the Article *Sculpture* in the *Dictionaire Encyclopedique*.

Sculpture,

Sculpture, next to Hiſtory, is the moſt durable depoſitum of the virtues and weakneſſes of men*. If in the ſtatue of Venus we have the object of a ridiculous and diſſolute worſhip, that of Marcus Aurelius affords a famous monument of the homage paid to the benefactor of the human race.

This art, in diſcovering to us the deification of vices, more forcibly repreſents the horrible cataſtrophes of hiſtory; while, on the other ſide, the precious memorials of thoſe uncommon mortals, who ought to have lived as long as their ſtatues, keep alive in our hearts the ſentiment of a noble emulation, animating the ſoul to the cultivation of thoſe virtues which have embalmed their names. On ſeeing the ſtatue of Alexander, Cæſar falls into a profound reverie; and, with eyes bathed in tears, exclaims: *How great was thy happineſs! at my age thou hadſt already ſubjugated a part of the earth*; *and I have yet done nothing for my glory.*—What a glory was his!—he deſtroyed his country.

The moſt noble end of Sculpture, in viewing it on the ſentimental ſide, is that of perpetuating the memory of illuſtrious men, and of giving models of virtue, ſo much the more efficacious, as the owners of it are no longer the objects of envy. We poſſeſs the portrait of Socrates, and we reverence it. Who will anſwer for it that we ſhould have the courage to love him, if he lived amongſt us?

Sculpture has another object, ſeemingly leſs uſeful than the foregoing; I mean when it is employed on ſubjects of ornament or grace: it is here however no leſs capable of inciting the ſoul to good or evil propenſities. Sometimes the ſenſations it raiſes are indifferent. The Sculptor, as well as the Writer, is praiſeworthy or reprehenſible, only as the ſubjects he treats of are becoming or licentious.

When the ſurface of the human body is the object of imitation, the powers of Sculpture are not to be confined to a cold

* Architecture, in the ſame manner, characteriſes nations; and even the ruins of it declare that character to poſterity.

resemblance, such as man might have been before the breath of God was blown into his nostrils. This sort of representation, although well expressed by its very exactitude, could only excite a commendation as cold as the resemblance, and the soul of the spectator would be totally removed. It is living, animated, impassioned Nature, that the Sculptor is to express, in marble, in bronze, or in stone.

Whatever the Sculptor takes for the object of his imitation, ought to be the continual subject of his study. This study, enlightened by genius, conducted by taste and reason, executed with precision, encouraged by the munificent attention of sovereigns, and by the advice and elogies of excellent artists, will not fail to produce master-pieces equal to those precious monuments which have triumphed over the barbarism of ages. In like manner such Sculptors as, not confining themselves to the payment of their share in that tribute of applause, so justly due to these sublime performances, make them the object of their profoundest study, and the rule of their labours, must arrive at that superiority which we admire in the Grecian statues. If I might be allowed to quote, as a proof of this, examples from the works of living artists, I could find them at Paris, in the gardens of Choisi *, and those of Sans-souci †.

The mind of the Sculptor is not to dwell only on the famous statues of antiquity, but on all the productions of genius whatever they may be.—The reading of Homer, that sublime painter, will exalt the soul of the artist, and impress the ideas of grandeur and majesty so forcibly upon it, that the generality of objects which surround him will appear to him but as atoms ‡.

Whatever

* A statue of Cupid by Bouchardon.

† A Mercury and a Venus by M. Pigalle.

‡ The author of the article *Epopée* in the *Questions sur l'Encyclopedie*, after giving some of the metaphors of the Iliad, adds: *The whole Iliad is full of these images, and this it was that occasioned Bouchardon, the statuary, to say:* " *After I had read Homer, I thought myself twenty*
" *feet*

Whatever the imagination of the Sculptor can create of the most majestic, of the most sublime, of the most uncommon, ought to be only the expression of the possible appearances of Nature, of her effects, of her sports, of her accidents. I mean,

" *feet high.*" M. le Comte de Caylus, who says he was witness to the fact, relates it somewhat differently in his *Tableaux tirés d'Homère & de Virgile*, p. 277. *This great artist*, says he, *on reading Homer in an old and abominable French translation*; [It is however astonishing that he had never heard of that by Madame Dacier;] *said to me, with eyes full of the fire with which his head was charged, " Since I read that book, my fellow-creatures are become fifteen feet " high, and all the objects of Nature are magnified before me.*" These two relations, although they differ a little in terms, yet come to the same point; which is, to express, by a turn of thought, the idea of greatness which remains after the reading of Homer.— Perhaps I may be in the wrong, but this reading affects me in a manner quite different from that in which it struck Bouchardon. On shutting the book, the men that I see and hear about me, appear very little, and myself likewise.— But here comes a third relator, who will give us the certainty of the fact, as well as discover the favourable dispositions which some men of letters bear towards men of art. Every one knows that M. de Boze was a very profound antiquary; some people even say, that he was a tolerable pedant, and that he thought his own knowledge prodigious: it might perhaps be added, that he was never sorry when he had an opportunity of pointing out any marks of ignorance in an artist. M. de Boze then assures us, that it was to *him* that Bouchardon said this bon-mot, and he cites this bon-mot as an instance of silliness. *Can you believe*, says he, *that Bouchardon, that great Sculptor, at the age of thirty years, had not yet read Homer?— I myself lent it him.— Do you know what he told me, on returning it?—That the poet had described men as more than fifteen feet in stature.* It is remarkable enough that M. de Boze should have lent Bouchardon *an old and abominable translation of Homer.* You see that the man of letters took the sensibility of the Statuary for weakness, and that he looked upon the artist as a poor simpleton supposing that the men of antiquity were really and physically more than fifteen feet high. We may be assured that the antiquary was not subject to the same force of imagination as his friend, and for this once genius did not converse with genius. Alas! our man of letters had forgot his Quintilian; and our artist, who perhaps had never read him, hit upon the same thought with him. *Nam Zeuxis plus membris corporis dedit, id amplius atque augustius ratus, atque (ut existimant) Homerus secutus, cui validissima quæque forma etiam in fœminis placet.* Quintil. lib. xii. c. 10. Zeuxis made his proportions larger than the life, thinking that they thereby acquired a nobler and more majestic appearance; imitating Homer, as it is imagined, who gives even to his women a robust form. A man of very good sense, and of many other fine qualities, took the liberty of representing to M. de Boze, that Bouchardon intended to applaud the poet by acknowledging the impression he had received from beholding the pictures of the sublime painter who had shewn Nature so great and so noble; but the profane and presumptuous mediator was hardly heard, and thought himself very well off that he did not receive the reward of a learned scorn and compassion for his pains.

that

that the Beautiful, even the ideal Beautiful, in Sculpture, as in Painting, ſhould be nothing elſe than the reſult of the real Beautiful of Nature. An eſſential Beautiful undoubtedly exiſts, but diſperſed through the different parts of the univerſe. To feel, to collect, to aſſort, to chuſe, even to imagine different parts of this Beautiful, whether in the character of a figure, as the Apollo, or in the ordonnance of a compoſition, like the boldneſſes of Lanfranc, Correggio, and Rubens, this is to diſplay by art, that ideal Beautiful which has its ſource in Nature.

Above all things, Sculpture is the enemy of thoſe forced attitudes which Nature diſavows, and which ſome artiſts have employed without neceſſity, and only to ſhew that they could ſport with Deſign. It is the profeſſed enemy alſo of thoſe draperies whoſe only elegance conſiſts in the ſuperfluous ornaments of a confuſed arrangement of folds. Laſtly, it abhors over-refined contraſts in compoſition, and an affected diſtribution of lights and ſhades. In vain will it be pretended that it is the machine: at the bottom it will be found to be only confuſion, and an unfailing cauſe of embaraſſment to the ſpectator, and of the little effect the performance will produce upon his ſoul. The more the efforts that are made to move us are diſcoverable, the leſs are we moved by them. Whence we are to conclude, that the fewer means an artiſt employs to produce an effect, the greater is his merit in producing it, and the ſpectator delivers himſelf up the more implicitly to the impreſſion which it was intended to make upon him. It is by the ſimplicity of theſe means, that the maſter-pieces of Greece were ſo perfectionated as to become the models for artiſts to the end of time*.

Sculpture has fewer objects than Painting has; but thoſe which come within her province, and which are common to the two arts, are the moſt difficult to be repreſented: theſe are, expreſſion, the ſcience of contours, the difficult art of diſpoſing of

* See a Letter to M. de S. P. on Taſte as it relates to arts and erudition, printed without date.

draperies, and of diſtinguiſhing the different kinds of ſtuffs of which they are compoſed.

Sculpture has, moreover, difficulties which are peculiar to it. In the firſt place, a Statuary is not eaſed of any part of his work by the advantage of ſhades, of back-grounds, of roundings, and of fore-ſhortnings. Secondly, if he have well compoſed, and well expreſſed one view of his work, he has only performed a part of his buſineſs; ſince that work has as many points of view as there are points of ſpace which ſurround it. Thirdly, a Statuary ought to poſſeſs an imagination, I do not ſay as abundant, but as ſtrong as that of the Painter. Beſides this, he muſt have a conſtancy of genius to put him above that diſguſt which the mechaniſm, the fatigue, and the ſlowneſs of his operations muſt neceſſarily occaſion. Genius is not to be acquired; it unfolds, extends, and ſtrengthens itſelf by exerciſe. A Statuary has not ſuch frequent opportunities for the diſplay of his genius as the Painter has, which is an additional difficulty, ſince genius muſt be ſhewn in a ſtatue, as well as in a picture. Fourthly, the Sculptor, being deprived of the ſeducing charms of colours, what knowledge ought he not to have in the means of attracting attention?—To fix it, what preciſion, what truth, what choice of expreſſion muſt he not put into his work?

We require then of the Sculptor not only the intereſt which reſults from the work entire, but alſo from every part of this whole; his work being generally compoſed of but one figure, in which it is not poſſible for him to unite the different cauſes productive of intereſt in a picture. Painting, independently of the variety of colours, intereſts by the different groups, the attributes, the ornaments, and the expreſſions, of the ſeveral perſonages which compoſe the ſubject. It intereſts by the ground, by the place of the ſcene, by the general effect: in a word, by the whole aſſemblage. But the Sculptor has often only one word to ſay: there is the more need that that word ſhould be ſublime. It is by that that he muſt touch the ſprings of the

ſoul,

ſoul, in proportion to its own ſenſibility and to the ſkill which he has diſcovered.

Not but that many able Statuaries have borrowed that aſſiſtance which Painting draws from colours: Rome and Paris furniſh examples of it. Doubtleſs, materials of different colours, employed with judgement, ought to produce pittoreſque effects; but, when diſtributed without harmony, that aſſemblage renders Sculpture diſagreeable, and even diſguſtful. The glare of gilding, the claſhing of the diſcordant colours of different marbles, will doubtleſs dazzle the eye of the vulgar, always captivated by glitter; but the man of taſte will turn from it in diſguſt. Gilding, bronze, and different-coloured marbles, ought only to be employed by way of decoration, never in order to rob Sculpture of its true character for the ſake of ſubſtituting one that is falſe; or, at beſt, but equivocal. Thus, Sculpture will loſe none of its advantages by being confined within the bounds preſcribed by Nature; which it would certainly do, if all the advantages of Painting were employed. Either of theſe arts has her peculiar means of imitation: colour is by no means of that number which belongs to Sculpture.

Nevertheleſs, though colouring, which belongs properly to Painting, be of great advantage to her; yet how many difficulties has ſhe to ſtruggle with, which are entirely unknown to Sculpture! The facility with which the illuſion is to be produced by colours, is itſelf a very formidable difficulty. The rare appearance of that talent is but too convincing a proof of it. By how much more numerous the objects are which Painting has to repreſent, by ſo much muſt her particular ſtudies be more numerous. A juſt imitation of different ſkies, of waters, of proſpects, the different inſtants of the day, the various effects of light, and that law by which a picture is to be inlightened by only one ſun, require a knowledge and an induſtry from which the Sculptor is intirely diſpenſed. Although there be ſtudies and labours which belong excluſively to each of the two arts, it

would betray a consummate ignorance to deny their relation. It would be an error to give preference to one of them at the expence of the other, because of their peculiar difficulties.

Painting is still agreeable, even when deprived of that enthusiasm and genius which characterise her; but, without the support of these two bases, the productions of Sculpture are lifeless and insipid. When equally inspired by genius, nothing disturbs their intimate union, notwithstanding there be some differences in their progress. If these sisters have not a resemblance in every thing, a family likeness is always to be perceived*.

Let us then insist upon this: it is for the interest of the arts. Let us insist upon it for the sake of enlightening those who judge of them without understanding their principles, which happens often even to minds of a higher class. To say nothing of our modern *litterati*, observe only how finished a knowledge of their connexion is shewn by Plutarch, when he writes: "We "may transfer to Dancing what Simonides said of Painting, and "say, that the Dance is a mute Poesy, and Poesy a speaking "Dance: for, assuredly, Painting receives no helps from Poesy, "nor Poesy from Painting; they absolutely borrow nothing of "each other, while the orchestra and the muse have an entire "affinity and perfect intimacy†."

If this translation be just, and what Plutarch meant to say; one might ask, what sort of paintings he had seen, and what knowledge he had of the art? Would not any piece of painting have shewn him the *Pictoribus atque Poëtis*, and the *Ut Pictura Poësis erit?* It should seem that he did not feel how much the art of creating a scene upon canvas, with proper personages (who must also be created before they can be represented), is at least as nearly related to Poesy, as the art of saying to people already made, and adapted to the exercise, *cross over and figure in*, after such a manner.

* Facies non omnibus una,
Nec diversa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum. Ovid, Met. ii.

† Plutarch. Sympos. lib. ix. quæst. 15.

manner. It is plain, that Plutarch has confounded the attitude of the model with the genius, the ſtudy, and the talent of the Painter, who has done but a ſmall ſhare of his work when he has conceived the ſcene, and placed his models, if he have not the exquiſite art of producing them well; for none of his perſonages can move a ſingle ſtep: he himſelf, and he alone, is the maſter, the taylor, and the dancers in his ballet.

However it be, it appears, that the honour of the old Painter, as well as reaſon, demand a reference rather to the Poet Simonides, than to the learned, the philoſophic Plutarch. After all, it is a diſcuſſion which belongs to ſentiment, in which I appeal to the man of taſte, the connoiſſeur, and the artiſt. Not but that Plutarch obſerves, in the firſt chapter of his treatiſe, "How "the Poets ought to be read," that "Poetry is an imitative art, "and a ſcience which correſponds with Painting," teaching his young man this rule of taſte, which is, he ſays, in the mouth of every one; "Poetry is a ſpeaking picture, and Painting a "dumb Poeſy." Whence we may perceive, how much men of very great merit may be liable to contradiction and error.

The dance, compared to Painting, leads me naturally enough to muſic and ſong, in compariſon with the ſame art; and the idea of a greater or leſs difficulty in theſe different talents makes one riſk the following queſtion: How comes it, that we ſee ſo many children excel to admiration in dancing, ſinging, and playing upon inſtruments, while ſo many millions of perſons, well brought up, and to whom the elements of painting are taught with all poſſible pains, yet remain all their lives incapable of producing any thing tolerable in that art? Is it, that muſic, ſinging, and playing upon inſtruments, are more natural than painting, or that this is much more difficult than thoſe?

Some children, it is true, have aſtoniſhed even artiſts themſelves by their prodigious diſpoſitions: but the number of theſe phænomena is ſo ſmall, and their final ſucceſs ſo very rare, that it is abſolutely impoſſible to bring them in compariſon with

thoſe,

thoſe, who, from their cradle, promiſe to be great muſicians, and afterwards become ſo.

If I had an inclination to argue ſophiſtically, it would be thus: A child, who performs a difficult piece of ſome great muſician, and acquits himſelf as well, and even perhaps better than the compoſer could have done, is not, on that account, a compoſer; and, in all probability, may never become one: which is a certain proof that this premature and raviſhing execution falls very ſhort of what conſtitutes the Muſician. All which is very true; but let us ſee whether it be ſatisfactory and a good anſwer to my queſtion. Perhaps there may be better; and, if I had thought upon them, I ſhould not have waited for their being made by others.

Give, I will not ſay to a child, but to a full-aged man, who has ſtudied painting from his infancy by taſte alone: give him a picture to execute, imagined and compoſed by a great painter; and ſee if this execution will approach, even within a tolerable degree, to that which a child can do of a difficult piece, compoſed by a great muſician: and try, I beſeech you, whether the great painter will not execute his compoſition, infinitely and conſtantly better, than the moſt able *dilettante* in painting that ever was.

Would a man of reflexion intirely loſe his labour in ſeeking for the cauſes of this difference? But this man of reflexion ought to be very impartial, and deeply ſkilled in the different arts. If I knew as much of Muſic, Singing, and Dancing, as I may of what conſtitutes Painting and Sculpture, I would employ myſelf in this reſearch; but, without that, I ſhould be afraid that my labour would be conſidered only as a vain effort of preſumption, indecently arrogating ſuperiority: the trouble would at leaſt be fruitleſs; which it is very proper to think of before the undertaking: therefore let us go on with our own.

If, by an error, of which, happily, there are but few examples, a Sculptor ſhould miſtake for enthuſiaſm and genius that unruly

tranſport which poſſeſſed Boromini and Meſſonnier; he muſt be informed, that, to ſwerve in that manner, far from embelliſhing objects, removes them from the truth of repreſentation, and only demonſtrates the diſorder of the imagination. Although theſe two artiſts were not Sculptors, they may nevertheleſs be quoted as dangerous examples, becauſe the ſame genius by which the Architect is led, conducts alſo the Painter and the Sculptor. The artiſt whoſe means are ſimple, is free and open; he gives up himſelf to be judged the more eaſily, ſince he uſes no ſleights and evaſions for eſcaping examination, which are only aſſumed as a maſk to ignorance. Let us then never call thoſe *beauties* in any work whatever, which ſerve only to dazzle the eyes, and tend to the corruption of taſte. That taſte ſo juſtly boaſted of among the productions of the human mind, is only the effect of good ſenſe operating upon our ideas: when too lively, it puts a bridle on them, and reſtrains their career; when too languid, it animates and inſpires them. It is to this happy temperament, that Sculpture, as well as all the arts invented to pleaſe, owes its true beauties; the only ones that are laſting.

As Sculpture demands the moſt auſtere exactitude, a negligent deſign is leſs ſupportable in that than in Painting. I do not mean, that Rafaël and Dominichino were not very correct as well as very able deſigners, and that all capital Painters do not look upon this as an eſſential part of their art; but, ſtrictly ſpeaking, there may be pictures, where it does not reign, which yet are intereſting by other beauties. A proof of it is in ſeveral women painted by Rubens, which, in ſpite of the Flemiſh incorrect character, will always inchant by the charm of the colouring. Execute them in Sculpture on the ſame character of deſign, the charm will be conſiderably diminiſhed, if not intirely deſtroyed. The attempt would be worſe, if made on certain figures of Rembrandt.

Why is it ſtill leſs allowable to the Sculptor than to the Painter, to neglect any of the parts of his art? Perhaps it may be owing

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to three particulars: To the time that an artiſt muſt give to his work; for we cannot endure that a man ſhould employ a number of years, only to produce an indifferent performance: To the value of the matter employed;—what compariſon is there between a piece of canvas and a block of marble? Laſtly, To the duration of the piece: every thing that is about the marble will fall to decay and ruin; but the marble remains. Break it into pieces, the very fragments ſhall deliver down to poſterity its excellences and defects.

Having thus pointed out the object and the general ſyſtem of Sculpture; we muſt now conſider it as ſubject to particular laws, which the artiſt ought to underſtand, leſt he ſhould infringe their juriſdiction, or extend it beyond the limits of its power.

It would be to widen too much the extent of theſe laws, to ſay that Sculpture cannot give herſelf up to a daring flight in her compoſitions, by the conſtraint with which ſhe is held down to the dimenſions of a block of marble. We need only to behold the Gladiator and the Atalanta; theſe Grecian figures prove ſufficiently, that marble will readily obey, when Sculpture knows how to command.

This liberty, however, which the Sculptor has over the marble, ſhould not extend ſo far as to comprehend the exterior forms of his figures, by details exceeding and contrary to the action and motion repreſented. The work, by detaching itſelf, as it were, on a back-ground of air, of a tree, or of architecture, plainly declares itſelf to be what it is intended to repreſent, from the greateſt diſtance at which it can be diſtinguiſhed. The lights and ſhades, copiouſly diſtributed, concur alſo in determining the principal forms and the general effect. From whatever diſtance you perceive the Gladiator and the Apollo, their action is never doubtful.

Amongſt the difficulties of Sculpture, there is one very generally known, and which requires the utmoſt attention of the artiſt; and this is the impoſſibility of going over again and rectifying

rectifying any bad touches he may have made, or of making any essential alteration in the composition, or in any one of its parts: a very good reason for obliging him to make his model, and to fix it in such a manner as to enable him to proceed with the greatest accuracy in his labour on the marble. For which reason, the generality of Sculptors make their models, or at least sketch them out, on the spot where the statue is to be placed. By this method they are invariably sure of their lights and shades, and of the proper effect of the composition; which otherwise might have a very good effect in the light of the work-shop, but a very bad one where it is to be fixed.

But this difficulty reaches farther yet. The model being at length perfectly well finished, let us suppose the Sculptor to have but one moment of drowziness or absence of mind. If he go on with his work in that instant, he is sure to maim some important part of his figure, while he thinks he is following his model, or perhaps even rendering it more perfect. The next day, with his head in better order, he finds out the mischief, without being able to remedy it.

Happy advantage for the Painter!—Not subject to this rigorous law, he changes, corrects, and does it over again to his mind; at the very worst, he reprimes it, or he takes another. Can the Sculptor dispose thus of his marble? If it be necessary that he begin his work again, the loss of time, the fatigue, and the expence which he must suffer, are not to be compared with those of the other.

Moreover, if the Painter have traced his lines properly, placed his lights and shades as they ought to be; a different aspect, or a different light, will not entirely rob him of the fruit of his ingenuity and his pains. But, in a work of Sculpture, intended to produce a harmony of light and shade, cause only the light to strike it on the right-side, which did come from the left; or from below, that which came from above; you will find it deprived of every effect, or productive of only disagreeable ones, unless the

 artist

artiſt have taken care to diſpoſe them for different lights. It often happens alſo, that the Sculptor, in endeavouring to make every point of view agree, riſks the omiſſion of poſitive beauties, and at length effects but an indifferent harmony. Happy, if his repeated cares and attention do not cauſe him to grow cold over his work, and arrive at perfection in that particular!

To ſet this reflexion in a clearer light, I will relate one made by the Count de Caylus. "Painting," ſays he, "has, out of "three lights, the choice of that which will beſt inlighten the "ſurface. Sculpture is diſpenſed from this choice; ſhe has them "all; and this abundance only occaſions her an infinity of trou-"ble and ſtudy, being obliged to conſider and reflect upon all "the parts of her figure, and then to make them conformable; "it is ſhe, in ſome ſort, that inlightens herſelf; it is her compoſi-"tion which gives and which diſtributes her lights. In this "reſpect the Sculptor is more a creator than the Painter; but "this vanity is only ſatisfied at the expence of numberleſs "reflexions and fatigues*."

When a Sculptor has once overcome theſe difficulties, artiſts and true connoiſſeurs are, without doubt, much obliged to him. But, how many people are there, that are very agreeably affected by our arts, who, not knowing their difficulties, are not judges of the glory of having ſurmounted them?

The *Naked* is the proper ſtudy of the Sculptor. The princi-ples of this ſtudy conſiſt in the knowledge of the bones, the exterior anatomy, and an aſſiduous imitation of all the parts, with every poſſible movement of the human body. The ſchools of Paris and Rome require this practice, and provide their pupils with the means of acquiring it. But, as Nature herſelf may have her defects, the young ſtudent, by often ſeeing and repeatedly copying them, will be apt to transfer them to his works; he muſt therefore be placed under the conduct of ſome

* From the *Mercure de France*, for April, 1759.

ſure

ſure guide, to give him the knowledge of juſt proportions and of fine forms.

The Grecian ſtatues are the moſt certain guide; they are, and will ever be, the rule of preciſion, of grace and elegance, as being the moſt perfect repreſentations of the human body. To a man ſatisfied with a ſuperficial examination of them, theſe ſtatues will not appear to be very extraordinary things, nor even difficult to imitate: but the intelligent and attentive artiſt will diſcover in ſome of them the moſt profound knowledge of deſign, joined to all the energy of Nature. Thus thoſe Sculptors who have moſt ſtudied, with choice, the antique figures, have ever been the moſt diſtinguiſhed in their profeſſion. I ſay, *with choice*; and I believe the remark to be well founded.

However fine the ſtatues of antiquity may be, they are ſtill but human productions, and conſequently ſuſceptible of the imperfections of humanity: it would therefore be dangerous for an artiſt to beſtow his admiration indifferently on every thing that bears the name of *antique*. It might happen, that, having admired the pretended wonders of certain antiques, and which they do not poſſeſs, he would make efforts to render them his own, and would fail of being admired. It is a diſcernment, inlightened, judicious, and unprejudiced, that muſt diſcover to him the beauties and the defects of the ancients; and, having once learned how to appreciate them, he will tread in their ſteps with ſo much the more confidence, as being convinced that they will conduct him to whatever is great and ſublime. It is in this judicious diſcernment that a delicacy of taſte appears; and the talents of the Sculptor are always in proportion to this delicacy. A very moderate knowledge of the ſtate of our arts among the Greeks is ſufficient to convince us that they too had their moments of drowzineſs and languor. The ſame taſte reigned, but an equal knowledge was not imparted alike to every artiſt: the pupil of an excellent Sculptor may poſſeſs the manner of his maſter, without having the ſame head.

Of all the antique figures, the moſt adapted to give the grand principle of the *Naked*, are, the Gladiator, the Apollo, the Laocoön, the Hercules Farneſe, the Torſo, the Antinoüs, the groupe of Caſtor and Pollux, the Hermaphrodite, the Venus de Medicis. I think I can diſcover the traces of theſe works in the performances of ſome of our great modern Sculptors. In Michael Angelo I diſcover a conſummate ſtudy of the Laocoön, of the Hercules, and of the Torſo. Can one doubt for a moment, on ſeeing the works of Francis Flamand, that he made the Gladiator, the Apollo, the Antinoüs, the Caſtor and Pollux, the Venus, and the Hermaphrodite, his ſtudy? Le Puget certainly took for his objects, the Laocoön and other antiques: but his principal conductreſs was Nature, whoſe ſprings and movements he had continually before his eyes in the Galley-ſlaves at Marſeilles: ſo much does the frequent ſight of objects, more or leſs relative to the true ſyſtem of the arts, form the taſte, or ſtop its progreſs. For us, who ſee nothing but ſhapes invented as it were in contradiction to the beauty of the human form, we muſt make conſiderable efforts before we can take-off the maſk; and ſee, and become acquainted with Nature in her proper elegance, that we may expreſs in our works this Beautiful only, independent of any mode whatever. It belongs to great artiſts, before whom all Nature ſtands uncovered, to give laws to taſte*; they are to receive none from the caprices and extravagances of Faſhion.

I muſt not here forget an important obſervation reſpecting the Ancients; it relates to the manner in which their Sculptors expreſſed the carnations. They were ſo little attentive to particularities, that they often neglected the folds and movements of the ſkin in thoſe places where it extends and replicates, according to the motion of the limbs. This part of Sculpture has been brought in our time to the higheſt degree perhaps of perfection.

* By *great artiſts* is meant, not only Painters and Sculptors, but capital maſters in all the arts. He who ſung ſo ſublimely the wrath of Achilles was a *great artiſt.*

An example ſhall decide whether or not this be a raſh obſervation. We will take it from the works of Puget.

In what piece of Grecian Sculpture do we perceive the implications of the ſkin, the ſoftneſs of the carnations, or the fluidity of the blood, ſo well expreſſed as in the works of this celebrated modern Sculptor?—It is impoſſible not to perceive the blood circulate in the veins of the Milo at Verſailles. What man of ſentiment would not be apt to be miſtaken on ſeeing the carnations of the Andromeda? while one may produce many fine antiques in which theſe expreſſions are not to be found. It would then be a ſort of ingratitude, if, while acknowledging the ſublimity of the Grecian Sculptors on ſo many other accounts, we were to refuſe our homage to a merit which is regularly ſuperior to them in the works of a French artiſt.

A ſcandalous paſſion for expoſing the defects of celebrated pieces is not the ſource of this obſervation. The artiſt, who ſhould not know how far ſuperior the beauties are to the negligences and defects of theſe invaluable monuments of antiquity, muſt be the child of ignorance or frenzy, or checked by that exactitude which mediocrity eſtabliſhes without the participation of genius *.

We have ſeen that it is the imitation of natural objects, in ſubjection to the rules of the ancients, which conſtitutes the true beauties of Sculpture. But the moſt earneſt contemplation of the antique figures, the moſt perfect knowledge of the muſcles, the greateſt preciſion of character, even the art of expreſſing the concurrent action of the ſkin; in ſhort, all the ſprings of the human body; this knowledge, I ſay, is only for the eyes of artiſts, and a very ſmall number of connoiſſeurs. But, as Sculpture is not exerciſed for the ſake of thoſe who practiſe the art, or ſuch as have acquired intelligence in it; the Sculptor, that he may catch

* The reader may ſee that it is this decent paſſage which M. le Chev. de Jancourt hath been pleaſed to ſuppreſs; that he might have an opportunity of making the bitter invective againſt me of which I complain in my *Obſervations ſur la Statue de Marc Aurele,* and in the *Notes ſur Pline.*

the

the applaufe of others, muft join to thefe neceffary ftudies ftill one more talent fuperior to them all. This talent, fo effential and fo uncommon, and which neverthelefs appears to be within the comprehenfion of every artift, is SENTIMENT. It muft be infeparable from all his productions. It is that which gives life to them: if other ftudies be the bafis of Statuary, it is Sentiment alone which is the foul of it. Acquired knowledge is the property of fome particular people; Sentiment belongs to all mankind: and, in refpect of Sentiment, all mankind are the judges of our labours.

To exprefs the forms of bodies, and to give no Sentiment to the expreffion, is doing work by halves. To endeavour at diftributing it throughout with regard to precifion, is only making fketches or producing dreams, the impreffion of which is erafed the moment you ceafe to behold them; and, if for any length of time, even while you behold them.—The union of thefe two properties (but how hard to bring them in conjunction!) is the fublime in Sculpture.

LOW-RELIEVES.

The Low-relief being a very important part of Sculpture, and as the ancients have not left us perhaps enough examples of all the kinds of compofition in it; I have a mind to hazard a few ideas on that fubject.

Firft, Low-relieves are to be diftinguifhed into two different forts; that is to fay, the fimple Low-relief, and the projecting Low-relief *. In the next place I fhall determine their properties, and fhew that both of them ought to be equally admitted, according to circumftances.

They are proper to a tablature of architecture, a pannel, a column, or a vafe; objects which are not to be pierced through, and which will not admit of being cut on †. A projecting Low-

* Le Bas-relief doux, et le Bas-relief faillant.

† Qui n'admettent point de renforcement.

relief

relief with ſeveral plans, in which the figures of the firſt ſhould be entirely detached from the main ground, would have a very bad effect; becauſe it would deſtroy the harmony of the architecture; and becauſe the back plans of ſuch a Low-relief would ſuppoſe, and make you imagine, a depth where there ought to be none; they would penetrate the building, at leaſt to the eye. Our Low-relieves, then, muſt project but little, and poſſeſs a very ſmall number of plans: which we ſhall find it difficult enough to execute, from the correſpondence and ſoftneſs of the ſhades which are to produce the effect. This Low-relief has no other effect than what reſults from architecture, to which it ſhould be in the moſt perfect ſubſervience. It will be underſtood, without my mentioning it, that the *Subject* and the *Style* muſt alſo agree with the architecture. I ſpeak here only of the effect produced by projections*.

But there are ſituations where the projecting Low-relief may be employed to great advantage, and where the plans and projections, far from producing any irregularity, would add greatly to the appearance of truth, which ought to be conſpicuous in every imitation of Nature. Theſe ſituations are commonly upon an altar, or ſuch other piece of architecture which one may ſuppoſe pierced, or capable of depth, and whoſe ſurface is ſufficiently large; becauſe, in a wide ſpace, a ſimple Low-relief would have no effect at a little diſtance from it. Such places, with ſuch extent, open a ſort of theatre, where the Sculptor ſuppoſes what depth he pleaſes, to give all the action, life, and intereſt, to the ſcene he repreſents, that the ſubject requires of his art; ſubmitting it always to the laws of reaſon, of good taſte, and preciſion. It is in this alſo that the connexion which ſubſiſts between Sculpture and Painting more evidently appears, ſhewing that the principles which both the one and the other draw from Nature are the ſame.—Away then with all ſubaltern practice, which, not daring to over-leap the bounds of cuſtom, is contented with

* Saillies.

placing

placing here the barrier between the artiſt and the genius. Thoſe who imagine that this kind of Low-relief would be productive of a tawdry effect, muſt be ignorant of the means which an intelligent Sculptor would uſe to avoid it*.

Becauſe other men, who lived ſeveral ages before us, have attempted only four paces in this career, ſhall we not dare to make ten! The ancient Sculptors are doubtleſs our maſters in thoſe parts of the art in which they attained to perfection; but it muſt be agreed, that in the *pittoreſque* of Low-relieves weo we nothing to their authority. One might take the trouble of proving, that the antique Low-relieves are a valuable ſource, whence we may draw the *coſtume* of the ancients. But no one ever doubted of it. However, this matter has no relation with *pittoreſque*, or, if you will, with *ſculptural* knowledge, which at preſent is my only ſubject.

Is it becauſe the ancients have left us ſome things to add in this kind of work, that we ſhould want emulation to carry it to perfection? We that have brought our Painting to a higher pitch than they did, in the art of *Chiaro-oſcuro*, in the magic of Colour, in the great Machine, and in the ſecret of Compoſition; ſhould we be afraid to undertake the ſame flights in Sculpture? Bernin, Le Gros, Allegarde, have ſhewn us, that it is in the power of genius to enlarge the narrow boundaries which the ancients traced in their Low-relieves. Theſe great modern artiſts have freed themſelves from the yoke of an authority which ought only to be ſubmitted to ſo far as it is reaſonable.

* M. Dandré Bardon has given, ſince theſe Reflexions appeared, an excellent idea of theſe Low-relieves. See his Eſſai ſur la Sculpture, p. 48, 49, 50. But read with great precaution what he ſays in p. 54. It was dictated by a patriotic enthuſiaſm. He is ſpeaking of the aſtoniſhing Puget, and his Low-relief of Alexander viſiting Diogenes. A work ſuperlatively excellent in many parts of its execution: but abſolutely falſe as it is a Low-relief: this indeed is only ginger-bread-work. Let us reſpect errors that are ſublime, and tolerate ſuch as are honeſt; eſpecially when they are ſo amply compenſated. Read the ſhort but juſt account of the Low-relief of Allegarde, in the work of M. Dandré, p. 55.

I introduce

I introduce then no new attempt, ſince I reſt upon examples whoſe ſucceſs has been determined. But, after all, if my opinion on the Low-relief ſhould be an innovation, as it would tend to a more exact imitation of natural objects, its uſefulneſs would render it neceſſary.

I will not leave any thing equivocal on the judgement I form of the Low-relieves of the antients. I perceive in them, as well as in their fine ſtatues, the elegant ſtyle in every particular object, joined to the nobleſt ſimplicity in the compoſition. But at the ſame time, however noble be this compoſition, it in no degree participates of the illuſion of a picture; to which the Low-relief ought always to pretend, ſince it conſiſts in nothing elſe than the imitation of natural objects.

Where the Low-relief projects very much, we need not be afraid, that the figures of the firſt plan ſhould not agree with thoſe of the back-ground. The Sculptor will know how to produce a harmony between the leaſt and the moſt conſiderable projecting figures; he wants nothing to this end but ſpace, and taſte, and genius. Far, however, from ſetting ourſelves againſt this harmony, becauſe we find it not in the antique Low-relieves, we muſt be careful to adopt it; we muſt rigorouſly require it.

An unvaried ſoftneſs of light and ſhade, repeated in the greateſt part of theſe works, is not harmony. The eye is hurt by the ſight of figures ſplit in halves, and ſtuck againſt a plane.— O thou divine art of penetrating the canvaſs, wilt thou never burſt that feeble barrier which is only reverenced for its antiquity!

Think not that I raiſe a chimera, which has no reality but in my imagination. I will prove to you that this veneration, badly underſtood, has a certain exiſtence. It has been maintained in our academy by one of its Rectors *. After having ſpoken of Low-relieves, the plans of which ſhould be conducted

* MS. Conference of the 9th of July 1673. "Sur l'ordre que le Sculpteur doit tenir "pour faire les Bas-reliefs ſelon les antiques, par M. Anguier, Sculpteur."

by a natural gradation, and after having blamed them, he adds: *This order of Low-relieves, although it be natural, has no connexion with the Low-relieves of the ancient Sculptors, who never made a uſeleſs figure, nor loſt one by its remote diſtance from the eye; and it was with the beſt reaſon that they made their figures, as well thoſe in front as thoſe behind, as large as poſſible; that they might all appear, and that the whole ſubject of the hiſtory might be told with few figures at the diſtance whence they ought to be ſeen.* He concludes, after having made ſome other obſervations, that, *the figures muſt differ very little in their height, and be almoſt equally large; by which means there will be nothing of the piece loſt.* This Sculptor reaſoned exactly as thoſe children do, who can only dance on the ſide of the room next the chimney, and are very ſtupid when they are bid to dance any where elſe. A humiliating example of the prevalence of prejudice and habit!

Some very able artiſts may nevertheleſs imagine, that a Low-relief ought to pretend to nothing farther than a deſign, heightened by a few ſhades, to render its projections perceptible; and the idea, of making it become a picture, may ſeem to them altogether out of character. The reaſon given by ſuch artiſts would be, perhaps, the little ſucceſs that this kind of Low-relieves have had, whenever any of our Sculptors have been bold enough to attempt them.—But, have they ſufficiently examined, whether the fault be in the art, or in the artiſt? Does the fine Low-relief of Attila, by Allegarde, come under this predicament? Have not thoſe which our pupils execute for the premium, the ſuffrage of the Academy, when they diſcover a happy correſpondence of plans, diverſified with judgement, united to the other qualities; that is to ſay, to ſuch a degree as the Sculptor ought to allow himſelf this freedom of diverſifying, without running into that pretended liberty, which would diſguſt rather than contribute to the illuſion? For I do not think it right, that an artiſt ſhould give himſelf up to a

dream,

dream, be it never ſo fine, in which his ſpectators cannot go along with him.

There is ſomewhere in the old Louvre, a great Low-relief in marble, executed by one of our famous Sculptors. The principal groupe, which conſiſts of two figures, is very ſaliant, without harmony, without gradation, and without any object that can properly lead to it; figures, almoſt inviſible, are juſt perceived to be bluntly placed in the back-ground. This Low-relief is the feeble workmanſhip of a great artiſt, who has hazarded a kind which he had not ſtudied, and which he did not enter into the ſpirit of. His example, therefore, would avail nothing in cenſuring that kind of Low-relieves of which I ſpeak, ſince it would ſerve to ſupport it. It would be nearly the ſame thing, as to ſay, we ſhould entirely give up the making of Odes, ſince Boileau failed in that on the taking of Namur.

It would be but a poor defence of the antient Low-relieves, to ſay, that the plane, which ſtops the ſight ſo diſagreeably, is the body of ſerene air, depurated from whatever might embarraſs the figures; ſince, in painting or drawing from a Low-relief, great care is taken to trace the ſhade that borders every figure, and which ſo perfectly informs you, that they are ſtuck againſt that plane which is called the ground: no one can imagine, that this ground is a body of air. It is true, this ridiculous imitation is made to ſhew, that the deſign is done from a piece of Sculpture. The Sculptor then alone is blameable for having given his work a ridiculous appearance, which muſt be repreſented in all the copies that are taken, and imitations that are made of it.

In whatever place, or of whatever projection, the Low-relief be, it muſt be in conſonance with the architecture; and the ſubject, the compoſition, and the draperies, muſt be analogous to the order of it. Thus, the maſculine ſeverity of the Tuſcan order admits only of ſubjects and compoſitions that are plain and ſimple; the cloathings will be copious, and have but few

 folds.

folds. But the Corinthian and the Compofite require fcope in their compofitions, and a fportive lightnefs in their ftuffs.

From thefe general ideas, I proceed to fome particular obfervations.

The rule of compofition and effect being the fame for the Low-relief and for the picture; the principal actors will occupy the moft interefting part of the fcene, and be fo placed, as to receive a fufficient body of light, which may attract the eye, and caufe it to remain upon them, preferably to any other part of the compofition, as it does in a painting. This central light is not to be interrupted by any diftribution of hard and meagre fhades, producing only blemifhes, and deftructive of the agreement. Little threads of light, perceptible in great maffes of fhade, will, in like manner, deftroy the agreement.

There muft be no fore-fhortening in the forward plans; efpecially, if the extremities of what is to be fore-fhortened project in front: they will be lean and intolerable. Being unnatural in their want of length, fuch parts will be without verifimilitude, and have only the appearance of pegs ftuck into the figures. So that, to avoid fhocking the fight, the detached members ought, as often as it is poffible, to reach the back-ground. By this means, they will gain another advantage; for thefe parts will be fupported by their proper ftay; if care be taken that what fhould feem detached, be not fixed too clofely to the back-ground, which would occafion a difproportion in the figures, and a falfity in the plans.

The figures of the fecond plan, or any of their parts, ought not to be fo faliant, nor of fo firm a ftroke, as thofe of the firft; which is to be obferved of all the plans according to their diftance. Though there fhould be examples of this equality of ftroke, even in the Low-relieves of antiquity; they muft be looked upon as defects of confonance, contrary to the order of gradation, which diftance, the atmofphere, and our eye, naturally produce between us and objects. It is in nature, that,

that, in proportion as objects are withdrawn from us, their forms become more indiſtinct with reſpect to our ſight: an obſervation the more eſſential, as in a Low-relief the diſtances of the figures are very far from being real. Thoſe which are to be ſuppoſed a fathom or two farther off than the reſt, in reality are often not an inch. It is only then by the vague and indeterminate ſtroke, joined to a proportion diminiſhed according to the rules of perſpective, that the Sculptor muſt hope to approach nearer to truth, and the effect we find in nature. It is likewiſe the only means of producing that agreement which the Sculptor can only obtain, and ought therefore only to look for, in the uniform colour of his materials.

That little ſhade, equally diſplayed round every figure, is to be avoided above all things; which, by deſtroying the illuſion of their projections, as well as their reſpective diſtances, give to ſuch figures the air of having been firſt flattened and paſted one upon the other, and then glued upon a board. This fault is avoided by giving the edges of the figures a ſort of rounding, and a ſufficient ſaliance in their middle. The ſhade carried from one figure to another, muſt appear naturally carried there. At the ſame time it muſt be obſerved, that the plans containing the principal figures, eſpecially thoſe that are to act a conſiderable part, be not confuſed; but that theſe plans be ſufficiently diſtinct, and properly ſpaced, that the figures may ſeem to move with eaſe. Whenever, by his advanced ſituation, a figure ought to appear inſulated, and detached from the others, without being ſo in reality; a ſhade is to be oppoſed againſt the ſide from whence his light proceeds; and, if it be poſſible, a *chiaro* behind his ſhade. A happy method, which Nature affords to the Sculptor, as well as to the Painter, of giving motion and diſtance to his objects.

If the Low-relief be compoſed of marble, its affinity with a picture will be ſo much the more ſenſible, as the Sculptor ſhall have diverſified the workmanſhip of the various objects.

The

The unwrought *, the granulated, and the poliſhed, employed with intelligence, have a ſort of pretenſion to colour. The reflexion which poliſhed marble darts from one piece of drapery to another, gives the appearance of lightneſs to ſtuffs, and diſplays a beautiful harmony over the compoſition.

If any one doubt whether the laws for the Low-relief be the ſame with thoſe for the picture, let him chooſe a piece of Pouſſin's, or Le Sueur's; let an able Sculptor take a model of it, and ſee whether he will not have a fine Low-relief. Theſe maſters have drawn the connexion between Sculpture and Painting cloſer, by making their ſcites always according to reaſon, always true. Their figures are, in general, at a ſmall diſtance from one another, and on very juſt plans: a rigorous law, which muſt, however, be obſerved with the moſt ſcrupulous attention in the making of a Low-relief. In fine, let me repeat it once more, this part of Sculpture is the moſt certain proof of the analogy there is between it and Painting. In breaking this band which connects them, we ſhould degrade Sculpture, and reduce it to the bare making of ſtatues *, while Nature affords it, as well as Painting, the power of making pictures. If there be any to whom this denomination may not be familiar, ſuch may conſult Vaſari, and other Italian writers; they will ſee, that a Low-relief is alſo called *quadro*, a word

* Le Matte.

† M. Dandré Bardon, in a ſhort note upon his *Eſſai ſur la Sculpture*, p. 3. ſays, *This term* [Statuary] *far from leſſening the idea we would give of Sculptors, ſerves to give it a much wider extent.* As the reaſon of this wider extent, founded on the word *Statuary*, is not given, I cannot tell what it may be. So I am obliged to believe, even to this very hour, that the name of *Statuary*, coming from *ſtatuere*, or from *ſtare*, to ſtand, to ſtop, would ſignify him who makes a figure, that ſeems to ſtop and remain where it is. I leave the reader to judge, whether the artiſt who repreſents a ſubject in motion, ſometimes even in very rapid motion, in a word, a machine that appears to communicate action, may not be allowed to ſay, that the name of *Statuary*, far from communicating to his art an idea of *much wider extent*, only ſerves to contract that idea. But do not let us ſquabble about words; call us *Sculptors* or *Statuaries*, it is the ſame thing to us.

which ſignifies, as well as *tavola*, a picture. The Italians ſaid more than 200 years ago, *un quadro di Baſſo-relievo*; a picture in Low-relief. Let us not deſerve the reproach of vilifying or depreciating an art, that our maſters have tranſmitted to us, together with the idea of its comprehenſion, and ſay, without entering into farther details, that, ſetting aſide colours, a projecting Low-relief is a very difficult picture in Sculpture. But, whatever be its difficulty, and even its ſucceſs, I do not pretend to ſay, that it will produce the ſame illuſion as a painting: I am only intimately perſuaded, that Sculpture ought to borrow of Painting, or rather of Nature, all the means that are favourable to her, and which may aſſiſt her in throwing as much intereſt as poſſible, into her compoſition. From not explaining ourſelves ſufficiently on any ſubject, it often happens, that, contrary to our intention, we make room for miſtakes and unmerited cenſure.

I am now going perhaps to merit one. But random thoughts which ſhoot acroſs the imagination, and are paſſed only for as much as they are worth, ought not to be condemned too rigorouſly. If I were inclined to ſeek my warrant from examples, I might quote many notions more ſilly upon the arts: but I ſhould be in the wrong to do ſo.

A compoſition in Low-relief has an object founded on the repreſentative principles of art. It commonly repreſents a ſcene, upon a piece of land, more or leſs extenſive: buildings, a rural proſpect, a wood, mountains, &c. are the theatre of the perſonages placed in front. If the Spectator makes the ſame ſuppoſition in beholding it, which the Sculptor made in compoſing it; if he have a lively imagination; and if, for once, he determines not to ſet good ſenſe and good taſte aſide; he perceives diſtances of fathoms or feet between the nearer and the more remote objects of repreſentation. Need he any thing elſe to obviate the idea of a wall, from that of the Low-relief? A vaſe, a pedeſtal, all bodies that are not diaphanous,

will

will then appear to him to be ſo, if he perceives upon them a Low-relief, whoſe figures are not tamely paſted againſt a wall, and meant to repreſent one.

It has been ſaid, that an opera, which makes its hero ſing out his dying agonies, is an abominable abſurdity. May one not ſay as much, and with the ſame juſtice, of every Low-relief placed upon a body which cannot be ſuppoſed to be pierced? If this province of Sculpture intereſted the public as much as an opera, if they had as much knowledge of it, we might then receive a multiplicity of hints, which would concern more than one Sculptor, and more than one Architect. They continue, however, to make operas in which every thing is ſung: Low-relieves will continue to be compoſed and placed indiſtinctly; and ſolœciſms will continue to be made as long as either.

As it is poſſible to find means for doing almoſt any thing, only take from a Sculptor all the fruit of his underſtanding; look on his performance but as a piece of embroidery, more or leſs elevated, an ornament with which Architecture is trickt out, with no regard to any thing but the propriety of poſition; your ſenſes, being become leſs delicate, will then perceive nothing but an aſſemblage of decoration, which, in that reſpect, may be pretty enough. This is by no means a paradox: it is ſo much a received opinion, that, in general, people regard it in no other light: if you doubt of it, inquire of architects, and, if you will, of ſome other artiſts.

D R A P E R I E S.

I have now only a few things to add, on a branch of Sculpture, about which artiſts are not altogether agreed; a branch as intereſting as it is difficult: the art of drapery.

Suppoſe that a Sculptor, taken with the ſimplicity of the fine draperies of antiquity, and ſhocked at the ingenious perplexities of thoſe of Bernin, ſhould uniformly adopt the ſtyle

of

of the antient folds; and that another Sculptor, obſerving all the natural replications of draperies, ſhould think himſelf allowed, as the imitator of Nature, to repreſent them all. You would perceive that theſe two ſyſtems, which appear incompatible with each other at firſt ſight, might be equally advantageous to Sculpture; and that it would be a prejudice to her if one of them prevailed over the other. Would it not be, in the imitative arts, the ſame thing as in languages, that are impoveriſhed by the retrenching of ſuch words as are the only repreſentative ſigns of certain ideas? By taking away the means of imitation from Sculpture, do you not impoveriſh it likewiſe? We ought then only to proſcribe whatever is cold, or heavy, or extravagant, or improperly placed.

Thoſe draperies which are called wet, are very juſtly of great uſe in Sculpture; for, being employed without affectation, without ſcantineſs, and agreeable to the ſubject and the occaſion, they leave the motions of the body perceptible, render its forms more ſenſible, leſs embarraſſed, and conſequently more intereſting.

The Grecian Sculptors, ſmitten with the Naked beauty, compoſed their draperies of ſuch fine ſtuffs, that they had the appearance of being wet, and as if ſticking to the ſkin. Their manners, their climate, their method of clothing, the ſtuffs of which their cloaths were made, accuſtomed their ſight to them, and formed their taſte. The garments worn in the iſland of Cos were ſo tranſparent, that the perſon was perfectly ſeen through them; and the Sculptors of Greece took theſe garments for the pattern of their draperies. But, ſince Sculpture has all Nature for her imitation, and Nature poſſeſſes beauties of more than one ſort, why muſt a Sculptor enſlave himſelf to one only manner of making his drapery, and employ it in different ages, climates, and circumſtances?

The great modern Sculptors, ſuch as François, Puget, Allegarde, Ruſconi, Le Gros, Angelo Roſſi, Sarrazin, and ſome-

times Bernin, ſufficiently evince how great beauty copious ſtuffs, diſplayed in large folds, are capable of producing. The ancients have ſhewn it likewiſe, though ſeldom: inſomuch however, that we may fairly cenſure that excluſive taſte for the little draperies of antiquity, by oppoſing to them the large ones of the ſame age; ſuch as the drapery of the Zeno in the Capitol, as well as that of the little Flora of the ſame palace, the ordonnance of the folds of which is of the ſame warmth with that of the moſt brilliant ſtuffs.

In the obſervations that may be made on the Draperies of the ancients, we are not to confound the workmanſhip with the order and the choice of the folds. If the workmanſhip be ſometimes without taſte, without conformity, and without truth; the order and the choice are almoſt always intelligent, and communicative of the ſublimeſt leſſons. We ſee by the fine copy of Le Gros, in the Thuilleries, the effect that ancient Draperies produce, whenever they are managed according to Nature. Every artiſt, that has ſeen the original of this figure, is convinced to what degree the execution of it is mean and poor; but, in the hand of a great Sculptor, we ſee to what perfection the ancient folds may be brought. The beautiful execution of the figures of the *Fontaine des Innocens*, ſtill further evinces the happy uſe that may be made of them. The figures repreſent Nymphs, and this ſort of Drapery agrees with them.

Let us dare to confeſs, that the ancients have often neglected the ſtudy of Draperies in detail; though they loſe very little by it, in compariſon of what they have left us to admire. No Sculptor ought to be ignorant at this time of day, that the chiſſel ſucceeds very well in the variety of workmanſhip which the different ſtuffs require. Whatever they are to be, let us obſerve, that the amplitude and quantity of the folds be not exactly alike; that their ſaliance and depth, which are to produce the ſhades, be harmoniouſly variegated: without which,

which, the eye will be fatigued by a monotony, like that which is ſo remarkable in the Draperies of the family of Niobe, where the folds, being deſtitute of harmony in the diſtribution, and of truth in the execution, have the reſemblance of ropes, chips, and pieces of bark, inſipidly arranged. Harmony is as neceſſary in Sculpture as in Muſic: the eyes are not more indulgent than the ears *.

Let the plans then of every fold be diſpoſed in ſuch a manner, as not to produce an acute angle of light or ſhade; which, being cut with hardneſs, will hurt the eye, injure the appearance of the carnations, and, like Gothick figures, will preſent only diſunited morſels: a defect which weakens, which even ſtifles, the real beauties of a work.

But we muſt totally proſcribe all floating Draperies; they interrupt the union, divide the intereſt, fatigue the eye, and hinder the principal object from being ſeen: excepting, however, in thoſe ſubjects and actions where the Draperies ought neceſſarily to be agitated; as in the Fall of Icarus, Apollo purſuing Daphne, &c. In ſuch pieces, being managed with ſkill and lightneſs, theſe kind of Draperies add much to the intereſt and the truth of the action.

They are employed alſo with good ſucceſs to diffuſe the lights and ſhades in Low-relieves, to join the groupes, and to aſſiſt uſefully in the ordering of the compoſition. But, if they be abſurdly croſſed by a multitude of breaks, as they are in ſome works of Bernin, then they aſſume the appearance of rocks, and abſolutely deſtroy both the appearance and the harmony of the whole.

If theſe principles be founded in taſte and Nature, the reſult of them is, that a Sculptor, in following them, may ſecede

* Vitruvius tells us very gravely, that the flutings were added to columns by way of imitating the folds of the robes worn by women: *Truncoque toto ſtrias, uti Stolarum rugas, matronali more dimiſerunt.* Lib. iv. cap. 1.—The Statuaries have very well paid-off the Architects, by making their folds like the flutings of columns.

from ſome particular ſyſtem. But of what conſequence is that to him? He ought to know, that, in the arts, the ſearch after Truth admits of no authority but what derives itſelf from her. Let him have the audacity to work for every age, and for every clime.

I ſaid above, that the order of the ancient folds was capable of giving the ſublimeſt leſſons. It becomes neceſſary then, for forming the taſte in Drapery on the beſt principles, to conſult the ancient Draperies, however they be executed, preferably to thoſe of the moderns, executed on a larger ſcale; they will become, in general, leſs cold, and more diverſified. This ſtudy ought even to be looked upon to the full as neceſſary in Drapery, as the ſtudy of the muſcles for the execution of naked figures.

Theſe principles, once acknowledged, are applicable to all the different modes of ſtyle; and Nature, who never loſes any of her rights, will always afford variety of leſſons, very advantageous to the Sculptor, who ſhall have taken from the ſtores of antiquity a preſervative againſt a wrong application of the different manners.

I have alſo ſaid, that the manners, climate, and habits of the Greeks, were the foundation of their taſte for cloſe Draperies. We muſt not therefore be ſurprized, if large and ample Draperies have not always ſucceeded in their judgement. It is for that reaſon, that we very rarely meet with it in their Painting. The Aldobrandine Marriage, an antique picture, is compoſed and draperied preciſely in the ſame manner with the Statues and Low-relieves of the ſame time.

We have the ſubject of Coriolanus, engraved from an ancient picture found in the baths of Titus, in which the figures are ranged according to the niceſt ſymmetry; the order as well as the taſte of the folds are wrought as in the antique ſtatues.

The Paintings and Sculptures found in Herculaneum are all in one ſtyle.

If any one ſhould ſtill entertain doubts about the ſucceſs of large and copious Draperies; to diſpel them, let him look at the figures of Le Gros, of Ruſconi, of Angelo Roſſi; all at Rome, in the church of St. John Lateran; the St. Andrew of François Flamand, in the church of St. Peter; as well as many other figures, whoſe large Draperies are univerſally admired. Had theſe Sculptors, in a ſervile manner, imitated the ancients, without aiming at any originality; of how many beautiful performances ſhould we at this time have been deprived!

WHAT IS AT PRESENT VERY ANCIENT, WAS FORMERLY NEW, ſays Tacitus; AND WHAT WE DO NOW WITHOUT PRECEDENT, MAY BECOME PRECEDENT HEREAFTER *.

* Tacit. Annal. lib. xi. c. 24.

EXTRACT of a LETTER

TO

MONSIEUR DIDEROT.

YOU know that I do not cloath PETER THE GREAT in a Roman cuirafs, for the fame reafon, why I fhould not cloath Scipio, or Cæfar, or Pompey, in a Ruffian caftan, or a French clofe-coat. But, fome perfons having thought that my hero was dreffed after the Rufs fafhion (for every one fees what he is afraid of), I find it neceffary to undeceive them; and, at the fame time, to inform them, that, with the ftricteft propriety, I have done fo, and been ftill undeferving of reproach.

If you fhould meet with any of thefe people in your way, and they fhould afk you how I could drefs after the Ruffian manner a prince who profcribed the Ruffian habit; before you tell them what habit I have given the ftatue, afk them in your turn, how they would have cloathed him. Speak very foftly to them, and fay: Gentlemen, we have but three forts of habits to chufe out of; or, at the moft, four: the Grecian, the Roman, the Ruffian, and the French. The Greek habit, in this inftance, will be of no ufe to us; the French, ftiff, fcanty, clipped, clofe, was never brought to its prefent perfection for the fake of heroic ftatues: fo the two dreffes that remain, are the Roman and the Ruffian.

If by the Roman is meant their civil habit; fay boldly, my friend, that that of the ftatue is not very different from it, nor even from the Grecian civil habit; for you know that the tunic of the Greeks reached down to the knees, fometimes quite to the heels; that the fleeves of it were long, and pretty clofe; and

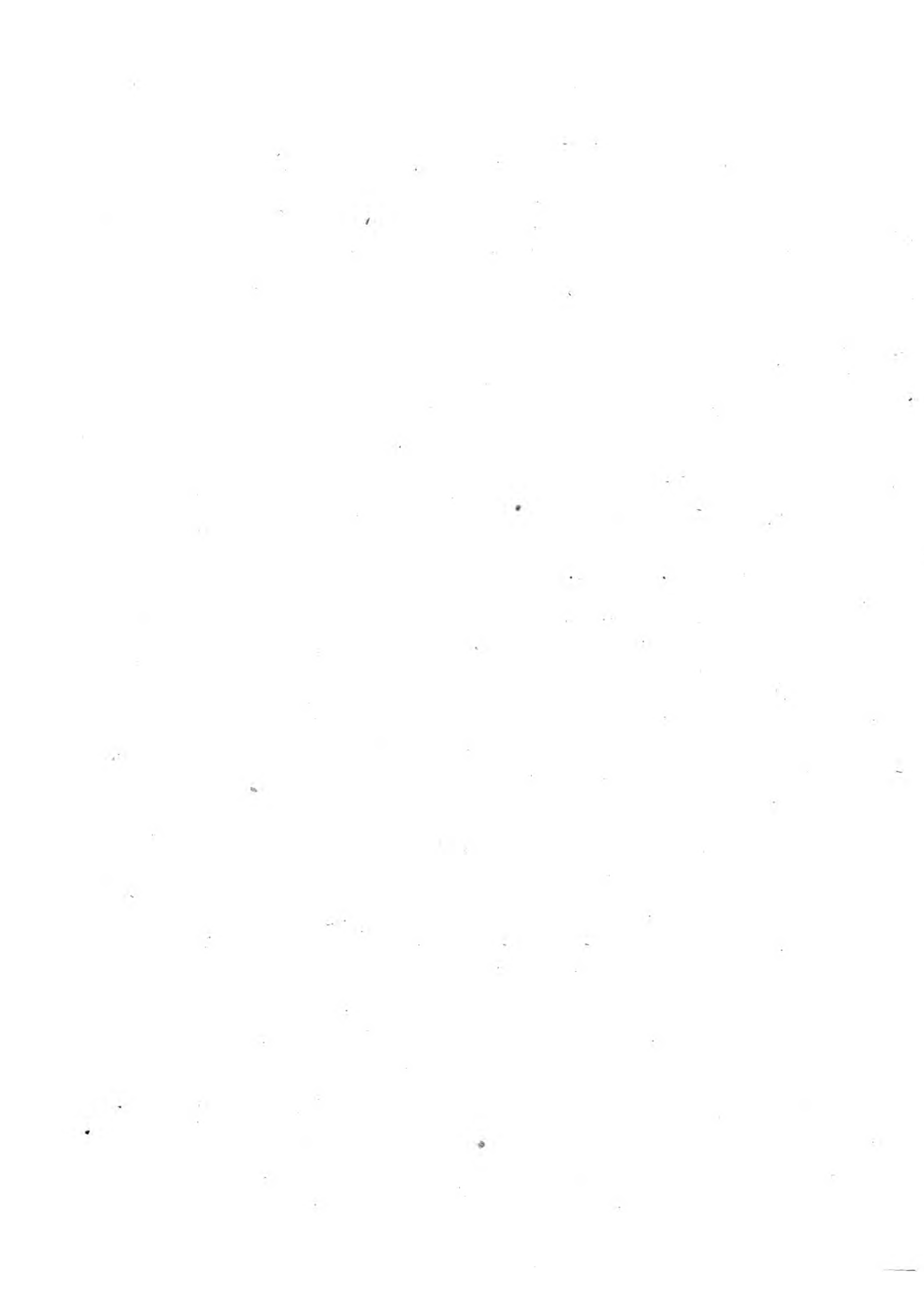
 when

To face p. 42.

PETER THE GREAT.

From his Statue by Stephen Falconet, at St. Petersburg.

Publish'd as the Act directs May 1st 1777.



when you ſee the ſtatue, you will perceive ſome reſemblance with that habit.

If, by the Roman habit that of the military be underſtood, the ſtatuary of the Ruſſian Lawgiver has nothing to do with it, ſince he does not repreſent him as a Soldier; under which idea, he would have had modern armour to have given him, although this emperor never wore a cuiraſs.

I ſhall not repeat the juſt and ingenious reproaches beſtowed on ſuch as think a prince, no matter of what country, ought to be habited like a Roman general at the head of an army: provided always, that this prince be made of marble or of bronze.

I have read, in a large and thick book, that a French Monarch ought to be cloathed *after the Roman manner*; *becauſe we know of nothing ſo auguſt and ſtriking as whatever belongs to ancient Rome, and the cuſtoms of a nation that was able to ſubject the whole univerſe to its laws.* All this may be true in ſome reſpects; and the ſtatue of Louis XIV. in the *Place des Victoires*, is not leſs *auguſt*, and leſs *ſtriking*, than that in the *Place de Vendôme*. That of Henry IV. on the *Pont-neuf* is equally *auguſt* and *ſtriking*; and yet theſe two ſtatues are not habited in a Roman cuiraſs:—but it is not my buſineſs at preſent to enter upon the diſcuſſion of this matter.

I have interrupted you: pray proceed in your converſation with the Gain-ſayers. Tell them, if you pleaſe, that the Roman cuiraſs is a diſguiſe, a falſe habit, when a perſon who is not a Roman is ſeen in it; and eſpecially when he is not repreſented as a warrior. Tell them, that, to give to a ſtatue, by choice, the attributes which do not belong to the character under which the hero is to be known, is a failure in the ſubject. Convince them, if you can, that, if we have nothing elſe to chuſe from, we muſt be content with the Ruſſian habit, which Peter the great did not like, and which he proſcribed. Tell them likewiſe, that, in ſpite of this hatred, and this proſcription, the Ruſſian habit continues ſtill to be that of all the

the common people of the nation, and that PETER himſelf wore it in his youth.

The Gentlemen will interrupt you at this laſt word, to inform you, that, whilſt the Emperor wore the Ruſſian habit, he was neither creator, nor reformer, nor legiſlator; and that, as ſoon as he became ſo, he wore it no longer. But to this you may anſwer, that this ſcrupulous exactitude would be only a leſſening of my idea, which is large, and univerſal; not at all local, not circumſcribed by any period of his reign, or confined to any particular fact whatever. Our buſineſs is not with the conqueror of Charles XII. but with the whole Empire of all the Ruſſias, and its great Reformer. My idea being abſolutely the Poetry of Hiſtory; and this idea being intirely emblematical, I may ſay:

" Loin ces rimeurs craintifs dont l'eſprit phlegmatique
" Garde dans ſes fureurs un ordre didactique;
" Qui chantant d'un Heros les progrès éclatans,
" Maigres hiſtoriens, ſuivront l'ordre des tems *."

To ſay only that PETER THE GREAT did not like the Ruſſian habit, and add nothing more, is only ſpeaking to the ears. The following are the reaſons, if I do not miſtake, which determined the Emperor to change it; too great to care about the cut of a coat, unleſs it led to ſomething farther.

All Europe knows, that, intending to deſtroy the prejudices attached to the habit of his country, to bring his people to a nearer reſemblance with thoſe of other nations, which they were one day to rival, perhaps to ſurpaſs, he did not content himſelf with preaching about it, but immediately attacked the effect in the cauſe: he was determined to enjoy the benefit

* Hence, timid rhymers! whoſe phlegmatic ſouls
Hiſtoric law, for want of fire, controuls;
Who would a hero's glorious deeds relate,
With every circumſtance of time and date.
PORTER.

he prepared for poſterity. The wearing of a beard, or a caftan, more or leſs, is nothing at all, ſo long as it doth not prevent harmony, or impede univerſal intercourſe. But, when once it becomes a cauſe and a mark of ſeparation and diſtance; take away the cauſe of this ſeparation, and mankind, brought nearer, more inlightened, better, and more happy, will bleſs their benefactor: what had been the ſource of antipathy, will now become only a garment of no importance.

It was not then, properly, a coat with long ſkirts, and a buſhy beard, which diſpleaſed the Emperor: he had quite another enemy to combat; national hatred and animoſity, which always cleaves to barbariſm, that ferocity of popular ignorance, inſulting every one that can and would inlighten them: this was the foe that PETER abhorred, that he wanted for ever to deſtroy. That enemy being now ſubdued, the habit is become indifferent. Let us not then diſcourage an art, difficult and laborious, which, in every nation, erects the eternal monuments of their love, and tranſmits to poſterity the portraits of the benefactors of the human race. Let us rather aſſiſt that art; let us enter into its views when they are favourable to it, and when beſides they have no eſſential inconvenience.

But we muſt return to the dreſs of the ſtatue, and may ſay, that, according to this ſuppoſition, we ſhould be reduced to chuſe between two abſurdities, the Ruſſian caftan, and the Roman cuiraſs, unleſs we were in poſſeſſion of a happy equivalent, which good taſte and the poetry of the ſubject provide us; *and this it is that is reſolved on, to the excluſion even of the Ruſſian habit*; becauſe we are not willing, by equivocal ſigns, to confound our hero with other ſovereigns, who have been great generals; becauſe this is not his principal characteriſtic; and becauſe we imagine, that he ought to be diſtinguiſhed by proper marks, and which belong to none but to him. We go farther, and ſuppoſe, that, if the dreſs given to the ſtatue were in any reſpect a diſguiſe, poſterity will not be more puzzled

 about

about it, than we are concerning many ancient ſtatues of Greece and Rome.

We have numberleſs repreſentations of emperors, of leaders, and others, which are either naked or diſguiſed; and yet we know, from hiſtory, and other monuments, that theſe princes and theſe commanders wore cloaths, and we know what ſort of cloaths they wore. Poſterity will know, with equal certainty, what kind of habit the Ruſſian Emperor uſed. The hiſtory of PETER THE FIRST, and that of CATHERINE THE SECOND, will laſt longer than the ſtatue. But ſuppoſe that ſucceeding ages ſhould become barbarous? There is no likelihood that this ſhould ſhortly happen in Ruſſia; but, if this ſhould happen, it will be ſo much the worſe for ſucceeding ages. Barbariſm doing nothing for the fine arts, the fine arts take good care to do nothing for barbariſm.

You may now be interrogated, why I do not therefore give my hero a Ruſſian habit, ſince I think myſelf in poſſeſſion of ſome good reaſons for it?—It muſt be firſt determined, what is the exact Ruſſian dreſs. If it be that which PETER THE GREAT himſelf wore; you will anſwer, that that habit, though more pittoreſque, and more ample than the French dreſs, would not, however, yield enough to the movements, effects, and lightneſs, neceſſary in a great work of Sculpture, and particularly in an equeſtrian ſtatue.

If they ſhould ſay, that the dreſs of the ſtatue reſembles the ſhort ſkirt of a Bourlack, on the Volga; you will only afford the importance it deſerves to ſuch an obſervation; for this reaſon, that thoſe who make it will not have diſtinguiſhed the ſtuff of the habit, in which the ſtatue is repreſented, from the cloth or drugget that a Bourlack wears. Beſides, as this dreſs, had it even ſome likeneſs to that of a Bourlack, is capable of fine workmanſhip, and productive of fine effects in Sculpture, when ſuppoſed to be made of ſilk, this obſervation would never have

come

come from an *Amateur*, much leſs from a *Connoiſſeur*; for, by this way of reaſoning, a Painter and a Statuary at St. Peterſburg could not cloath a diſtinguiſhed figure in a ſtuff capable of fine folds, becauſe the coarſe cloathing of certain Aſiatics might nearly reſemble what the artiſt had choſen. Did the Ruſſian princes, who wore a habit ſomething like it, take theirs from the Bourlacks of the Volga? Is the habit of Marcus Aurelius, in his equeſtrian ſtatue, taken from that of the Roman country-men, which it reſembles a little; or from that of the Ruſſian boors, from which it differs not much?

But we come now to one of the beſt objections, as it is thought. PETER THE GREAT, ſay ſome people, did great things in the way of conqueſt; he ought therefore to be repreſented as a conqueror.—This Monarch did great things alſo, in eſtabliſhing a port, and creating a navy: he himſelf even worked at ſhip-building. He might as well be repreſented as an Admiral; or in his Carpenter's apron, as he uſed to be ſeen in his ſhop at Saardam. Does not every body know, that, to paint an object, is to take a comprehenſive view; and that, to ſtop at particulars, is to be *ſhort-ſighted*?

When an heroic monument is to be conſecrated to the memory of a prince; and this prince has atchieved great matters in different, and various, and even oppoſite departments; he has gained victories in war; he has enacted wiſe laws, and founded eſtabliſhments conducive to the happineſs of his people, in time of peace; his academical eulogium may turn upon both theſe texts: but, in a ſtatue, which can repreſent but one inſtant, we muſt conſider and chuſe. If we give the preference to his civil qualities over his military virtue; this preference cannot juſtly be condemned, till it ſhall have been certainly determined, which of theſe two kinds of glory belongs more particularly to him, who has ſo well deſerved them both; but

more eſpecially which of them was moſt uſeful to the happineſs of mankind *.

After this, my friend, if you ſhould not have been underſtood; if theſe worthy gentlefolks continue to ſtart other difficulties—make them no anſwer at all. If, however, you ſhould perceive among them any of thoſe ſtrange people, who are yet very common, that underſtand an authority better than they do a reaſon, whiſper them in the ear: *Do not make yourſelf uneaſy; the ſtatue of* PETER THE GREAT *is habited very nearly like that of* MARCUS AURELIUS, *and perhaps with a greater degree of dignity; his habit is that of all nations, that of all men, that of every age; in a word, it is an heroic habit.*

I ſhould be very glad if your auditors would continue to examine the habit more than the man, *Tanta gentium in rebus frivolis plerumque religio eſt*; and that they would tell you: The civil dreſs became the philoſophic emperor; but the conqueror at Pultava ought to be otherwiſe repreſented. Oh, my dear gentlemen, you will then ſay to them, this is called teizing people, and abuſing their patience. Have you forgotten the victories of the Roman over the Parthians, the Quadi, the Marcomanni? and do you not remember that PETER was creator and legiſlator?

My friend, you know my ſollicitude in getting the opinion of others about my works, and my docility in following thoſe that appear to me to be well-founded; I have given proofs of this, particularly in the Equeſtrian ſtatue which I am at work upon. But you know alſo, that it belongs only to artiſts who have

* The author has ſeen, ſince the publication of the French edition of this letter, the MS. letters of M de Voltaire to Count Ivan Ivanovitch Schoualoff, written in 1757, 58, and 59, the time in which M. de Voltaire was employed in writing *The Hiſtory of Ruſſia under* PETER THE GREAT. In his letter of the 10th of July 1759, the celebrated writer ſees the Ruſſian Emperor in the ſame light as I muſt have ſeen him to make his ſtatue, and as Poſterity will ſee him. He ſays: *Tous les princes ont négocié, tous ont aſſiégé des villes & donné des batailles. Nul autre que* PIERRE LE GRAND *n'a été le reformateur des mœurs, le createur des arts, de la marine, et du commerce. C'eſt par la ſurtout, que la poſtérité l'envisagera avec admiration.*

deſerved well of a nation famous for the arts *, to be thoroughly acquainted with the methods and the taſte of the art they profeſs; or, at leaſt, that they ought not to take any law from the prejudices and caprices of faſhion, however well-intentioned the promoters of it may be.

So, I ſhall go on with my ſtatue. When it is finiſhed, the gainſayers and adviſers will ſhut their mouths; or, if they find it more convenient, they will keep them open: this muſt be left to their diſcretion; we ſhould never throw a reſtraint upon any one.

FALCONET.

* You ſee that I here challenge a general maxim, without making any application of it. Vaſari is very welcome to ſay, in ſpeaking of the four artiſts choſen to preſide at the obſequies of Michael Angelo, *Ils etoient tous d'un nom celebre, & d'un merite illuſtre dans leurs arts.* He himſelf is one of the four; and he mentions his own name. *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonaroti.* Perhaps he might ſpeak the truth: but people do not forgive a man who ſpeaks the truth in ſuch a caſe; and they are in the right.

LETTER

LETTER

FROM

MONSIEUR DIDEROT.

WELL, well, my friend, let us leave this horſe of Marcus Aurelius. Whether it be beautiful, or whether it be ugly, what is it to me? I am not acquainted with the Sculptor, and am totally unintereſted in his work: let us ſpeak however of your's. If you knew the extent of my friendſhip for you, you would feel the ſollicitude with which I ſet my foot in your building.—But I have ſeen, I have examined; and I will never pronounce again upon any piece of Sculpture, if you have not erected a ſublime monument, and if the execution do not anſwer in every reſpect to the dignity and grandeur of the conception. I told you in the firſt warmth of my heart, and I repeat it after the cooleſt conſideration, that the Bouchardon, to whoſe name you have the modeſty to ſubmit, did go into a manége, where he ſaw ſeveral horſes, and thoſe very fine horſes; that he ſtudied them very intenſely, and imitated them in a maſterly manner; but he never entered the ſtables of Diomed or Achilles, nor ſaw the courſers of immortal breed. It is you alone, my friend, that have realized them to my imagination, exactly as the old bard had before deſcribed them.

The truth of Nature is preſerved in all its purity; but your genius has found out the means of uniting with it that poetical enchantment which aggrandizes and aſtoniſhes. Your horſe is no more a copy of the fineſt horſe exiſting, than the Belvidere Apollo is the exact copy of the fineſt man: both the one and the other are the works of the creator and the

 artiſt.

artiſt. It is coloſſal, but it is light; it is vigorous and graceful; his head is full of life and ſpirit. As far as I can judge, it is very intelligent; but the different minutiæ of ſkill that enter into the compoſition, although known to be there, yet in no degree whatever are hurtful to the effect of the whole; every thing is large. We perceive nothing of the pains and labour that any part has coſt; it ſeems the work of one day. Suffer me to ſay a thing ſomewhat uncivil. I knew you to be a very ingenious man; but let me die if I thought your head capable of any thing like this! How could I ever have imagined, that this aſtoniſhing image was lodged in the ſame mind cloſe by the delicate figure of Pygmalion's ſtatue? two pieces of ſuch uncommon perfection, that, for that very reaſon, they ſhould ſeem to exclude each other. You have been capable, in your life-time, of producing a charming Idyllium, and a magnificent piece of Epic poëſy.

The hero is well in his ſeat. The hero and the horſe together make a beautiful Centaur, the human and thinking part of which forms an aſtoniſhing contraſt, by its tranquillity, with that of the animal and ſpirited. That extended hand commands and protects exactly as it ought to do. The countenance challenges reſpect and confidence. That head is in the higheſt ſtyle; it is compoſed in a great and learned manner; a fine and beautiful morſel: though ſeparated from the trunk, it would place the artiſt on the firſt line of maſters. You ſee, my friend, that, in this place, I do not ſpeak of you, although this head be as much the teſtimony of your courage, as of the abilities of Mademoiſelle Collot.

The firſt look ------------- But I had almoſt forgotten to ſpeak of the dreſs of the ſtatue. The dreſs is plain, and without luxury: it embelliſhes, without attracting too much of the attention; it is in a high ſtyle, which agrees with the hero and the reſt of the monument. The firſt look arreſts you, and makes a ſtrong impreſſion. We give our-

ſelves

ſelves up to it, and that for a length of time. We examine nothing apart; we have not time to think of it; but, as ſoon as we have paid this tribute of admiration to the whole, and begin to enter on the examination of particulars; when we ſeek for defects in comparing the different parts of the animal with one another, and ſee the niceſt preciſion prevail; when we take one part ſeparately, and find it a perfect imitation of an exquiſite model; when we make the ſame critical analyſis of the hero; when we return to the whole, and on a ſudden unite the two great parts: it is then that we ſtand juſtified for having at firſt delivered ourſelves up to admiration and amazement. One then looks round, to ſeek a defective aſpect. It is impoſſible to find one. On beholding it on the left ſide, for example, if the ſpectator have that vigour of conception which can penetrate plaſter, or marble, or bronze, and ſee it at the ſame time on the right ſide, he trembles with exultation on beholding with what preciſion the one belongs to the other. This is what I did from every point of view in which your compoſition is to be ſeen; and always with the ſame ſatisfaction. Your work, my friend, has indeed the true ſtamp of the fineſt performances: to appear wonderful the firſt time one ſees it, and to appear more wonderful the ſecond time, and the third, and the fourth: to quit it with regret, and to carry the idea of it always in your mind. I have already tranſported it from your ſhed, placed it on its rock, and fixed it in the ſquare where it is to ſtand; I behold it there, and feel all its effect.—Let that ſerpent remain under his feet. Had not PETER, has not every great man had ſerpents to cruſh? Is it not the true ſymbol of the different kinds of miſchiefs employed to prevent ſucceſs, to raiſe obſtacles, and hinder the noble efforts of generous ſouls? Is it not right that, after they are dead, their monumental effigies ſhould trample on the ſymbol of that hideous paſſion which coſt them ſo many tears in life?—Beſides all this,

this, it does very well there, is of an indiſpenſable mechanical neceſſity, and is ſucceſsfully concealed.

And can you think that I do not take a thouſand times more pleaſure in praiſing a modern, that is my friend, than I ſhould have taken in criticiſing an ancient utterly indifferent to me?—Very well then, that horſe of Marcus Aurelius is a very incorrect copy of a badly-choſen horſe: it has neither that ſimple and vigorous truth which never fails to pleaſe; nor that bold falſehood which ſometimes amply ſupplies its place. The muſcles of the neck are far from juſt, in reſpect either to poſition or ſize. There is no reference between the coldneſs of the eyes, and the mouth, which is old and diſtorted into grimace. The whole muzzle is ugly; the parts of the mouth, of the eyes, and of the neck, are without art, and without elaſticity: they have more the appearance of gaſhes and flutings than folds of fleſh. Seen in front, one cannot tell to what ſort of animal the lower part of the head belongs; and one ſhould be inclined to give the upper to an ox or a bull, whoſe broad and full reſemblance it bears. The belly is ſwollen and heavy. It is a certain truth, that this horſe goes the long walk with his hind-feet, and prances with his fore-feet *; a falſe and impoſſible motion: your remarks on this circumſtance, as well as all the reſt, are juſt. But you will be anſwered, (for what is there that ſome people will not anſwer?) you will be anſwered, that this horſe may be of a race of which you are entirely ignorant; that it is a Mede or a Parthian; that, perhaps, though it was an ugly beaſt, yet the emperor was fond of it, and fifty other things, I do not know what. To all this you will reply in very few words: that an animal, whether handſome or ugly, always moves according to the laws preſcribed by Nature, unleſs he be lame or monſtrous; that the country of this animal is of no

* Il eſt sûr que ce cheval *marche le grand pas* des pieds de derrière, et qu'il *piaffe* en même tems de ceux de devant. T.

G concern

concern to you, ſince it was never made a matter of inquiry or, that, if it be abſolutely reſolved on that the Statuary of this beaſtly horſe had good reaſons for not making a better, you are glad of it with all your heart: and they may be ſatisfied with this anſwer, or not ſatisfied, as they think proper. But, I am ſure, there will be but one voice on the beauty of *your* horſe, although you have omitted no means of giving room for different ſentiments. Ah, my friend, you have done excellently to compaſs your deſign in ſo maſterly a manner! for the world would have blamed mediocrity in you; and, if you are inclined to be candid, you muſt agree that it requires more logic and more juſtice than people commonly poſſeſs, not to think themſelves authorized in it. I forgot to mention, that I think the caſt you have of the antique horſe, very well taken, and that even the minuteſt parts of it are very perfect.

I thought I had nothing more to ſay; but I was miſtaken. It is thought very ſingular at Paris, as well as at Peterſburg, that you ſhould have truſted the execution of ſo important a part of your monument as the head of the hero, to your pupil. Thoſe that talk ſo, are ſuch as chuſe rather to find fault with a very well-judged reſolution, than to recollect that it is juſtified by the example of ſeveral ancient Sculptors. The moſt eſſential point is, that a work be finiſhed after the beſt manner poſſible.—Well then, Mademoiſelle Collot knows better how to take a likeneſs than you do. Why ſhould ſhe not? A good hiſtory-painter would hardly make ſo fine a portrait as La Tour, who, on his part, would never attempt an hiſtorical compoſition: every one has his talent, by ſo much the more confined as it is excellent.

You executed my buſt; Mademoiſelle Collot made a ſecond: you were curious to compare your performance with her's. The two buſts were placed together before you; you thought your own very indifferent, compared to Mademoiſelle Collot's; you ſnatched up a mallet, and broke your work to pieces. There,

There, my friend; he that is capable of ſuch an act of juſtice, is born for many other matters which the multitude will never know how to ſet a value upon.

Poor Loſſinkoff, who made a drawing from your monument, and declared that a man muſt make a copy of it before he could poſſibly perceive all its merit, is then no more? Although I had hardly time to be much acquainted with him, I am ſorry for it. Farewel, my friend; enjoy the ſatisfaction of having executed the nobleſt work of the kind in Europe, and enjoy it many years. I embrace you with all my heart.

Do not however imagine that I ſhall immediately begin to ſpeak of your work, on ſetting my foot in France. It will take me up at leaſt a fortnight to exhauſt all that I have to ſay about the Great Sovereign; and it will hardly be ſufficient. What a woman, my friend!—What an aſtoniſhing woman! But you know it as well as I do; we have nothing to inform each other of on that ſubject. She has good reaſon to be eaſy of acceſs; for, the more one ſees of her, the greater ſhe appears. Adieu, adieu: I continue in expectation of this formidable winter; perhaps it will make its appearance at laſt.

DIDEROT.

St. Petersburg,
the 6th of December, 1773.

☞ M. Diderot, *while at Paris, did not much admire the* Obſervations on the ſtatue of Marcus Aurelius; *he even explained himſelf very freely on that head. Being come to Peterſburg, he ſaw and judged for himſelf. I immediately aſked him for a paragraph containing his opinion; which he wrote upon the ſpot; but he has added an eulogium on my work, in which he has certainly too much conſulted his own ſenſibility. So that any perſon is welcome to abate one half of his praiſe, and I ſhall be very well contented*

with

with the rest. The applause which our friends bestow upon us, is as subject to exaggeration as the censure of an enemy can be. However it be, I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of publishing Monſ. Diderot's *letter; it may be imagined, however, not without his permission, and even his entreaty.*

Several persons, as it is said, pretend, that I form my judgment on the ſtatue of Marcus Aurelius *from nothing but a plaster cast of it: and they conclude therefore that I judge amiss. This attempt to embarrass the question is very feeble; since I have moreover proved, that my examen of the whole of the horse is not built entirely on the plaster; and for what concerns it, it is easy to refer to its true original.*

Prejudice lays hold of every thing it can; this is natural enough; but I should be very glad if any of the above-mentioned persons would be so obliging as to give themselves the trouble of replying to the following reasons. I. *Whether the plaster be or be not cast upon the statue, is perfectly foreign from the object of my examination.* II. *It is a colossal work, wherein the nice exactitude of the minuter parts being more or less preserved, makes no alteration whatever in the shape; and it is the shape which is principally considered.* III. *It is placed and seen at the same height in my shed as in the Square of the Capitol; and, at that distance, could the very small particulars which the cast would not bring off be perceived?—But they are all of them there, and the model is extremely well cast.* IV. *I am a Statuary, and I do not think that I have given so very great proofs of ignorance in my profession, as to warrant a belief that I could be so grossly mistaken in a matter that is as much within the capacity of the lowest workman as of the ablest master. At the same time, it must be on the supposition that where the object in question is beautiful, there it is deformed in the cast; it must be, I say, that not only I could be no statuary, that I had not studied horses, but was moreover provided with a portion of stupidity sufficient to blind my eyes against those two points: upon this, it will not become me to pronounce. But what shall we say of certain Sculptors who have not seen the*

plaster

plaster that I have; who have not understood, nor even read, what I have written upon it; who every day take casts of figures; who find the plasters thus made, very exact, unless any accident has injured them, and who say, nevertheless, the taking of the cast must have disfigured the horse of Marcus Aurelius which is at Petersburg, since in casts so taken a figure is enlarged by one half? *We must think, and we must say, that certain people are very ill-advised in thus publishing in the face of day, either their falsehood, or their duplicity of sentiment. But if these should be Sculptors, who, for instance, should have had a cast made on the model of plaster, àlamain *, of a colossal figure, we should not be mistaken were we to reckon them in the number of folks of ill-disposed heads; for we must always speak with caution concerning hearts. As to those who are reduced to say, that the original parts which are in my possession of* the statue of Marcus Aurelius, *are only* copies *made at Rome by young persons, and that the bronze itself has never had a cast taken from it; it affords me great pleasure in having an opportunity of complimenting these gentlemen on their discernment, their profound sagacity, and their candour. They deserve commendation also for their address in endeavouring to mislead the judgment, and in extricating themselves from a scrape into which they had very cunningly drawn themselves.*

* As this phrase may have some technical meaning, I leave it so, rather than run the risk of mistaking it. T.

SCHEME.

SCHEME

OF AN

EQUESTRIAN STATUE.

SHORTLY after my arrival at St. Peterſburg, a perſon of great merit, and whoſe variety of talents extend equally to the ſciences as to the fine arts, had the kindneſs to favour me with a Memorial, or Scheme, which had been already preſented, for the embelliſhment of the city. This general project, which he had then received back, contains ſomewhat which concerns the ſtatue of PETER THE GREAT. Its purpoſe is, to point out *the moſt favourable poſition* of this ſtatue, and that which *appears* to the author *preferable to all others.*

The compoſition of my work having been made at Paris, after I had received the orders of HER IMPERIAL MAJESTY by Prince Demetri Gallitzin; the compoſition having met with approbation there; the Empreſs having ſaid that ſhe was pleaſed with it; I found myſelf under an abſolute impoſſibility of reaping any advantage from the Memorial, or the Scheme which it contains: and, if I have made no uſe of it, it is not certainly from obſtinacy

obſtinacy or want of politeneſs. I cannot ſay whether or not this Memorial is much known : but I ſhall give a faithful extract from it ; that is to ſay, of that part only which concerns me ; to which I ſhall ſubjoin the letter of thanks which I had the honour of writing to the eſtimable author of the ſaid Memorial on my returning it. But I have firſt a word or two to ſay.

Nothing is more common than the charge of heedleſſneſs, obſtinacy, and repugnance to advice : which imputations are laviſhed on men who generally have it not in their power to juſtify themſelves. As ſoon as their performance is made public, they hear it ſaid : *I gave him a fine idea* ; *if he had but followed it, his work would have been a great deal better.* As it often happens that theſe perſons have the beſt reaſons in the world for not telling exactly what that idea was, the poor artiſt remains oppreſſed with the weight of a vague accuſation ; and for the very reaſon that it continues vague : I have therefore thought fit to produce the *idea* which I have been honoured with on the ſtatue of PETER THE GREAT. If on one ſide the inſtructions *ſeem* good ; it is very neceſſary that, on the other, I be permitted to ſay wherefore they are not followed. This anecdote may for a moment amuſe the lovers of the fine arts, and afford ſome inſtruction to artiſts. It will hence appear, that, with the beſt intentions in the world, one is forced to reject certain ideas, notwithſtanding they ſhould be entirely new. I think I have given a reaſon why I print this ſcrap of a project, and my anſwer to it. If the author ſhould complain, I may ſay : *Sir, it is only a little piece of compoſition ſtolen from a friend.* It is a thing done every day.

Extract

Extract of a Memorial, intituled, *Position of the Statue of* PETER THE GREAT, *in the Square to be formed between the Senate on the South, and the Admiralty on the North. By the* B. de B*****, *dated the First of December*, 1766.

" PETER THE FIRST, *as founder of an empire*, in the majesty " of a legislator (I do not here speak of the attitude and attributes " of this statue, I may give them in another place), *looking directly* " *along the course of the Neva, against the current of which he is* " *placed, and to which he still gives law*; ordering the erection of " this capital, its fortress, its harbour, its admiralty, its twelve " colleges, its corps des cadets for the land and sea service, its " academies, its canals, with the other military and civil edifices " which belong to the construction of a city destined to become " what I have before described. Beholding, *with his right eye*, " the admiralty, that part of the city which is on the left side of " the river, the imperial palaces, with all the buildings and " monuments of which it consists.

" *Opening the same eye*, and extending it over the vast empire " left him by his fathers, and which he augments by new " possessions, at the same time that he unites them more closely " with Europe, by *opening* to them the military and political " sciences, the liberal and mechanical arts, manufactures, " commerce, the junction of seas and rivers, and the navigation " of all the seas in the world.

" *With the left eye* beholding another part of his founda- " tions, as Vassili Ostroff, the citadel, the twelve colleges, the " academies of arts and sciences, the great haven full of ships " from all nations, the magazines filled with goods from the " four quarters of the world, *the merchants' Exchange*, the corps " des cadets both for the land service and the sea, the hospitals " for soldiers and sailors, with all the other buildings that are " in the city.

" *Directing, at the ſame time, his looks,* over Finland, Carelia,
" Ingria, Eſthonia, and the other conquered provinces. This
" poſition appears to me the moſt favourable, and preferable to
" every other, &c."

Anſwer ſent to the Author of the Memorial.

S I R,

I HAVE read your projects for the embelliſhment of the city of St. Peterſburg. I confeſs, that one ought to poſſeſs a great fertility of imagination, to diverſify ideas ſo much as you have done. But there are a number of particulars in your work which you will permit me to admire, without being able to judge of their merit; and for this reaſon, that they are out of the reach of my underſtanding. The acknowledgement of my ignorance will not diſpleaſe you, for it is very juſt; you are ſo likewiſe; and certainly one muſt reaſon very badly on what one does not underſtand.

But, Sir, as I have paſſed the greateſt part of my life in taking no little pains about Sculpture, and continue ſtill to employ myſelf in that way with ſome attention; give me leave to make a ſmall obſervation or two on your idea of the ſtatue of PETER THE GREAT.

You ſay, if I am not miſtaken, that, *looking directly along the courſe of the Neva*, the ſtatue ſhould look alſo, *with the right eye towards the admiralty*, and *with the left eye towards Vaſſili*

Oſtroff. Are you ſenſible, Sir, how perfectly new this idea is, and how long it is likely to continue ſo?—So long as the human eyes continue to be placed and organized as you and I have them. This manner of looking has exiſted no where, that I know of, but in the proverb, *He looks two ways for Sunday*; or in this, *He has one eye at St. Paul's and the other at Charing-croſs* *.

You add, that the ſtatue is to direct, *at the ſame time, its looks over Finland, Carelia, Ingria, Eſthonia, &c.* Now here is an *at the ſame time* which embarraſſes me not a little. Might it not be the look of his left eye only that you meant to ſay? But you had deſtined that to Vaſſili Oſtroff, while you fixed the right eye to the admiralty †. How can one adjuſt two views, ſo directly contrary, in an *at the ſame time?* Even ſuppoſing that the ſtatue had but one eye, I do not ſee how that one, fixed on an object at the diſtance of ſeveral fathoms, could look on countries many hundred verſts off, without making ſome movement: and you know that an eye of bronze makes none.

I ponder it in my mind, I collect together the whole force of my imagination, I torment myſelf in endeavouring to find out, how a ſtatue can be contrived to look ſtrait-forward, on the right hand, on the left, behind, and near, and afar off, *at the ſame time*, or in ſucceſſion; and all this, without moving either the eyes or the head; and I own myſelf quite at a loſs. The moſt famous Statuaries of antiquity never came near to this *acmè*; and the head of the ſublime Jupiter of Phidias might have majeſtic brows, the world might recognize the power that made Olympus tremble with its almighty nod; yet I ſwear to you

* *Il a un oeil aux champs et l'autre à la ville.—Il regarde du côté de la Bourgogne pour voir ſi la Champagne brûle.* It is, however, true that the camelion can ſee before him with one eye, and behind him with the other; with the one upwards, and with the other downwards. But our buſineſs here is with a man to be repreſented in bronze.

† It is neceſſary to inform the Engliſh reader, that the admiralty ſtands on one ſide of the river Neva, and Vaſſili Oſtroff (Baſil's Iſland) on the other. The Neva is about a thouſand and ſeventy Engliſh feet broad at the admiralty. *Tranſlator.*

it

it was only fit to be a barber's block, compared to that which you propoſe.

In the mean time, Sir, till I ſhall become more enlightened in my art than thoſe great maſters were, you will allow me to think, that the looks of the hero, directed in the manner you preſcribe, would be thoſe of a very ſquinting hero, and that his look would with great difficulty paſs for an agreeable leer.

You add: *I do not here ſpeak of the attitude and attributes of this ſtatue; I may give them in another place.* Could you think, Sir, on the 1ſt day of December, in the year of our Lord 1766, about two months after my arrival; could you think that a Statuary, ſelected for the production of a monument o this importance, was deprived of the faculty of thinking, and that he had hands which he could not move without the direction of another head than his own?

Very far be it from me to impute to you ſo ſhort a ſight, and which would diſcover ſo groſs an ignorance of our arts; to you, Sir, above all men, who have given to a bronze views ſo extenſive, ſo diverſified! They can be only ſtrokes of the pen, eſcaped in the heat of compoſition. What mortal man is not liable to ſuch eſcapes! You will doubtleſs acknowledge the inaccuracy; you will doubtleſs efface it.—But perhaps you may have been acquainted with only ſubaltern artiſts: one may eaſily believe, without any failure in probity, that thoſe people are every thing that an artiſt can be. Yet, Sir, if you had vouchſafed to correſpond with our Muſes, you would have ſeen that the artiſt is uſually the creator of his productions, or ought to be ſo. Give your advice to him; becauſe in the beſt-furniſhed head there is always room enough for error. But, if you take upon you the title of *Giver of ideas, ex officio*, you will be laughed at. The man that purſues his work with candour, loves advice; he aſks it; he examines it; and, if it be good, he follows it. The man that thinks all the knowledge in the world to have taken its reſidence in his head, is not only poet, muſician, painter, ſtatuary,

 writer,

writer, and whatever you pleaſe; but add boldly, that, beſide all this, he is a fool.

Although I enter not into the detail of the reſt of your projects, for the reaſon that I had the honour of mentioning to you at the beginning of my letter; I do not for that the leſs admire your zeal and your courage. You ſee, Sir, that I treat you with the liberty you allowed me, on communicating your projects; the ſame liberty that you had, on ſeeing my work, and which you ſhall always have, whenever you may chuſe to give yourſelf that trouble.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, &c. &c.

St. PETERSBURG,
April 15, 1769.

OBSER-

OBSERVATIONS

ON

Lord SHAFTESBURY's LETTER from ITALY,

CONCERNING THE

ART, or SCIENCE, of DESIGN.

YOU know, my friend, that our books are new in this part of the world, after they have been pretty well read in France. I have juſt ſeen a Tranſlation of the works of my lord Shafteſbury, wherein I find a ſhort letter on Deſign, at the end of the third volume. You may imagine, that I was curious to ſee how a man of his merit had treated that ſubject. I read it, and found that every thing was in the beſt order poſſible. On one ſide, I beheld a lord; who, that he might have a fine picture, compoſes it himſelf, arranges the figures, and diſtributes the objects it is to contain: conſequently, on the other ſide, I muſt ſee a Painter ſubjected to the orders of a man that rewards his baſeneſs and intereſtedneſs, rather than his talent; in whom I ſee only a poor workman, who is under the neceſſity of having the compoſition of his work done for him, becauſe a poor workman has generally a defect of genius, natural to his ſtation.

An artiſt, a true artiſt, he who compoſes his own works, and compoſes them well, has never this meanneſs, the inſeparable companion of want of genius, and want of education. It is generally remarked, that thoſe who profeſs the arts have a greater or leſs degree of pride and ſpirit, and at the ſame time more or leſs modeſty, according to the compound ratio of their genius, and the praiſes or cenſures to which they are liable. Why have great artiſts, as well as great men of every kind, commonly the greateſt ſhare of modeſty? It is, becauſe it belongs only to ſouls of a certain ſtamp, to feel what they are worth, to have a juſt idea of perfection, and of the impoſſibility of ever reaching it. Praiſe a great man, and you will be aſtoniſhed at his modeſty. At that time he is meaſuring what he knows, and what he does, with what he ſees before him yet to know and to do. But, if you be ſo ſilly, or ſo preſumptuous, as to deſpiſe him, his pride becomes then ſuperior to every thing, becauſe then he compares himſelf with the perſon that judges him; he recollects himſelf, and finds within the qualities which Du Frénoi gives to the great artiſt*. Great artiſts then never have this meanneſs; and indifferent ones are no leſs without it, becauſe vanity lifts them above their ſphere: but the vanity of theſe would diſguſt from having it. To be an artiſt, in general, is not compatible with a vile and creeping ſoul; which muſt belong to ſome baſe workman, who, uſing only the faculties of his body, has never any opportunity of cultivating his mind, and elevating his ſoul.—Let us return to the picture.

You will perhaps think it extraordinary enough, that a perſon ſhould addreſs himſelf, by choice, to ſuch a Painter, for the purpoſe of getting a fine picture. Come, come, let us not be too great formaliſts. As for me, I ſee nothing in it but what is very ſimple; and you will preſently agree with me, if you be conſiſtent.

* *Judicium, docile ingenium, cor nobile, ſenſus ſublimis.* De arte graphica, v. 488.

A noble

A noble lord takes a journey into Italy, moſt commonly for the ſake of gaining knowledge in the fine arts. He admires, he reaſons, he becomes connoiſſeur; he has a great deal of good ſenſe, much more perhaps than the moſt able painter of them all.—What folly! you exclaim; this lord knows nothing of Deſign or Painting.—That is but a trifling difficulty, my friend; are not handicraftſmen to be had every where? Is it the journeyman that cuts the ſtone, or the hodman that carries the mortar, towards the conſtruction of a palace; is it they that make the palace? You will ſee, from this little piece of my lord's, that it is nearly the ſame thing in Painting. Hear him ſpeak, and you will find that he moreover expreſſes himſelf like a man that has gone through the whole courſe of the fine arts.

" I muſt, by way of prevention, inform your lordſhip (my " lord writes to his friend), that after I had conceived my no- " tion, ſuch as you ſee it upon paper, I was not contented " with this, but *fell directly* to work; and by *the hand* * of a " maſter-painter †, brought it into practice, and formed a real " deſign. This was not enough. I reſolved afterwards to ſee " what effect it would have, when taken out of mere black-and- " white, into colours: and thus a ſketch was afterwards drawn. " This pleaſed ſo well, that, being encouraged by the Virtuoſi, " who are ſo eminent in this part of the world, I reſolved " at laſt to engage my Painter in the great work. Immediately " a cloth was beſpoke of a ſuitable dimenſion, and the figures " taken as big or bigger than the common life; the ſubject being " of the heroic kind, and requiring rather ſuch figures as " ſhould appear above ordinary human ſtature ‡."

* Obſerve, that it is not *the head.*

† This maſter-painter was *Paul Mathei*, a very indifferent performer. Why does not my lord name him? It is, becauſe one was making a rhodomontade. I am ſorry for the philoſophy of the ſketch-maker, but that is not without example; therefore, let it paſs: and, for the other, he was guilty of a meanneſs, which is alſo not without example; ſo let that paſs likewiſe.

‡ Characteriſtics, vol. iii. p. 396. 8edit.

You ſee that the Painter here has nothing to do but to *make* the figures according to the dimenſions given by the undertaker and director in chief. In truth, it is poſſible that he may *do* the ſhape, the colouring, the expreſſion, &c. but it is like the workmen in a building, who do every thing under the direction of an architect *.

But why did not my lord Shafteſbury apply to one of theſe *Virtuoſi, who are ſo eminent in that part of the world?* I have already told you, that, with all their *virtuoſity*, thoſe people know much leſs about the matter than ſuch as have more good ſenſe than they have. Beſides, they are a reſtive ſort of animals, who inſiſt upon compoſing as well as painting their own pictures, and are too badly brought up to carry their complaiſance beyond a certain point.

There are a thouſand examples of this wretched obſtinacy of Poets, Painters, Sculptors, and Muſicians, who are mad enough to be themſelves the inventors of the works which they produce. I will mention one of this unhappy race. Annibal Carracci was ſo abandoned to the guidance of his uncontroulable genius, as to have compoſed in the Farneſe palace the *Judgement of Hercules*, exactly as my lord Shafteſbury gave himſelf the trouble *of conceiving it* more than 100 years afterwards: you may ſee the copper-plate engraved from it by Peter Aquila, and the picture itſelf remains to this day.

You will there perceive, that Hercules, *being young, and retired to a ſolitary place, in order to deliberate on the choice he*

* It is eaſy to ſee where the irony falls. Although workmen, who know neither how to compoſe nor to conduct a work, execute the labours of the different parts which compoſe it; yet there muſt nevertheleſs be a man of genius to conceive the whole of it together, to fix all the forms of it, and to regulate the choice and the diſtribution of them. This is the great art and ſcience of the architect; it is by this that he pleaſes and aſtoniſhes us. The painter, who, after having *conceived* his picture, ſhould deliver the execution of it to other painters, who, I do not ſay are upon a level with thoſe who execute a building, but to middling painters; would ſuch a man produce a fine work? Certainly no. This is where the compariſon ends, and the ſophiſm which attracts the irony begins.

was

was to make of the different ways of life, was accosted by the two goddesses, Virtue and Pleasure *. You will be surprised to see a man who has not yet determined what sort of life to lead, already armed with a thick club. Indeed, you will not see the skin of the Nemæan lion, because Hercules had not yet brought him down. My lord Shaftesbury has been bolder than Carracci; he has not been content with *inventing* a club for Hercules before the time in which he ought to have it, but has cloathed him, to boot, with the skin of the lion that was still running in the woods. He gives for reason, that *the natural genius of Hercules, even in his tenderest youth, might alone answer for his handling such arms as these, and bearing, as it were in play, these early tokens of the future hero* †. An *inventor*, somewhat more bold than his lordship, would give a smaller club to the infant Hercules in his cradle: it is certainly the properest play-thing for him.

What appeared to me extremely well-*conceived*, is to have described, after the idea of Prodicus, the picture of Carracci, without ever once speaking of Carracci, who likewise did it after the idea of Prodicus, without even giving the least suggestion that such a painting existed. These are bold strokes, that an ordinary man would not have dared to reach. I know not what the readers of my lord's letter at London said of it; but I know what those *Virtuosi* in Italy thought of it, *who encouraged him to undertake the* great work. If the painter that executed it only set about it for the sake of laughing in his sleeve at the composer, it was an unwarrantable piece of mockery, which an upright mind never allows itself.

In the original story ‡ *or fable of this adventure of our young Hercules, it is particularly noted, that Pleasure, advancing hastily*

* Characteristics, vol. iii. p. 350.

† Ibid. p. 354.

‡ The original history is lost. Suidas and Xenophon have preserved all that we know of it: some authors have spoken of it; and others, as Lucian, have imitated it.

*before Virtue, began her plea, and was heard with prevention, as being first in turn**. This is very well said of my lord; and is what Carracci observed after Xenophon, his author. He has given Pleasure the action of a heated declaimer; while Virtue, more gentle, only moves her arm, to point towards the glory promised to the virtuous man.

Among the different attributes that my lord proposes to give the figure of Virtue, this is one: *It might prove, however, a considerable advantage to our figure of Virtue, if, holding the lance, or imperial sword, slightly, with one of her hands stretched downwards, she could by that very hand and action be made to express the latter meaning [applause]; opening for that purpose some of the lower fingers of this hand, in a refusing or repelling manner* †. This idea is not in the picture of Carracci; and I do not know whether or not he ever invented so expressive a manner of holding a lance or a sword, or whether he knew Virtue *à l'aile de pigeon* ‡.

My lord lays out the decoration of his landschape very properly. Indeed he could hardly have *conceived* it more fitly for the subject, than Carracci had executed it. If he has retrenched, added, or changed; these are only little particulars entirely indifferent, which one must not examine, though they may not be altogether exact: Carracci himself is liable to censure in this respect §.

As to the moral part of the picture, one may aver that my lord Shaftesbury saw it in its proper light; and that he has written of it, as all sensible men have written and spoken of it,

* Characteristics, vol. iii. page 352.

† Ibid. page 367.

‡ We have no phrase adequate to this in English. *T.*

§ Poussin has also given a picture on this subject, but without excellence. His Pleasure is not voluptuous; his Virtue is almost squalid. The justness and the beauty of the design are the chief merit of this picture. It is engraved by Mr. Strange, a very excellent English engraver. To treat such subjects, a man must be an enthusiast, and have flights of the sublimest poetry.

since

ſince pictures were made. . . . . Would you believe it, my friend?—Yes, you will believe it, for you alſo are a friend of truth, of the grand, of the ſimple: I ſee the picture of Carracci much better in Xenophon *, who relates this idea of Prodicus, than in all that my lord Shafteſbury has written about it. The one raiſes my ſoul, and aggrandizes it; I become a Hercules; the other confounds my ideas, cramps and leſſens them, in making them paſs through fine-drawn diſcuſſions, and the different parts he propoſes. In a word, after reading it through, I am no longer any other than my lord Shafteſbury's painter, leaving out of the account his intereſtedneſs and his baſeneſs.

Among many parts of this work, which might furniſh ample matter for obſervations, there is one that appears to me more curious than all the reſt. Its originality renders it ſafe from all commentary. I ſhall tranſcribe it, although ſomewhat long. The bare reading of it will remove your doubts, if any yet remain.

" For the ordinary works of Sculpture, ſuch as the low-re-
" lieves, and ornaments of columns and edifices, great allow-
" ance is made. The very rules of perſpective are here wholly
" reverſed, as neceſſity requires; and are accomodated to the cir-
" cumſtance and genius of the place or building, according to a
" certain œconomy or order of a particular and diſtinct kind; as
" will eaſily be obſerved by thoſe who have thoroughly ſtudied
" the Trajan and Antoninus pillars, and other relieve-works of
" the antients. In the ſame manner, as to pieces of engraved
" work, medals, or whatever ſhews itſelf in one ſubſtance (as
" braſs or ſtone), or only by ſhade and light (as in ordinary

* Καὶ Πρόδικος δὲ ὁ σοφὸς ἐν τῷ συγγράμματι τῷ περὶ τοῦ Ἡρακλέους, (ὅπερ δὴ καὶ πλείστοις ἐπιδείκνυται) ὡσαύτως περὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀποφαίνεται, ὧδέ πως λέγων, ὅσα ἐγὼ μέμνημαι. Φησὶ γὰρ Ἡρακλέα, ἐπεὶ ἐκ παίδων εἰς ἥβην ὡρμᾶτο, (ἐν ᾗ οἱ νέοι ἤδη αὐτοκράτορες γιγνόμενοι δηλοῦσιν, εἴτε τὴν δι' ἀρετῆς ὁδὸν τρέψονται ἐπὶ τὸν βίον, εἴτε τὴν διὰ κακίας) ἐξελθόντα εἰς ἡσυχίαν καθῆσθαι, ἀποροῦντα, ποτέραν τῶν ὁδῶν τράπηται. Καὶ φανῆναι αὐτῷ δύο γυναῖκας προϊέναι μεγάλας. κ. τ. λ. Xenoph. Memorab. lib. ii.—T.

" drawings or ftamps), much alfo is allowed, and many things
" admitted of the fantaftic, miraculous, or hyperbolical kind.
" It is here that we have free fcope withal for whatever is
" learned, emblematical, or ænigmatic. But, for the completely
" imitative and illufive art of Painting, whofe character it is
" to employ in her works the united force of different colours;
" and who, furpaffing by fo many degrees, and in fo
" many privileges, all other human fiction, or imitative art,
" afpires in a directer manner towards deceit, and a command
" over our very fenfe; fhe muft of neceffity abandon what-
" ever is *over-learned, humourous, or witty*, to maintain her-
" felf in what is natural, credible, and winning of our affent;
" that fhe may thus acquit herfelf of what is her chief province,
" *the fpecious appearance of the object fhe reprefents.* Otherwife
" we fhall naturally bring againft her the juft criticifm of Ho-
" race, on the fcenical reprefentation fo nearly allied to her:

" Quodcunque oftendis mihi fic, incredulus odi *."

This doubtleffly learned and fenfible paffage may fhew you, that the knowledge of our arts is fometimes in proportion to what men, otherwife of very great merit, think proper to write about them.

* Characteriftics, vol. iii. p. 380, 381.

St. Petersburg,
May, 1769.

F I N I S.