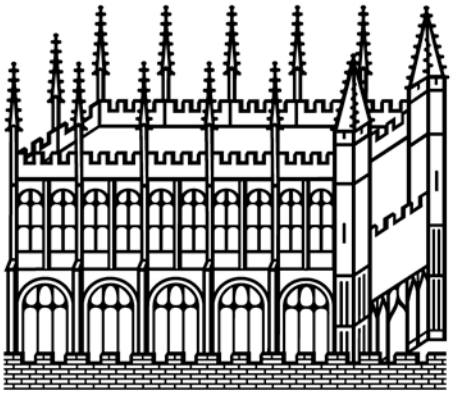

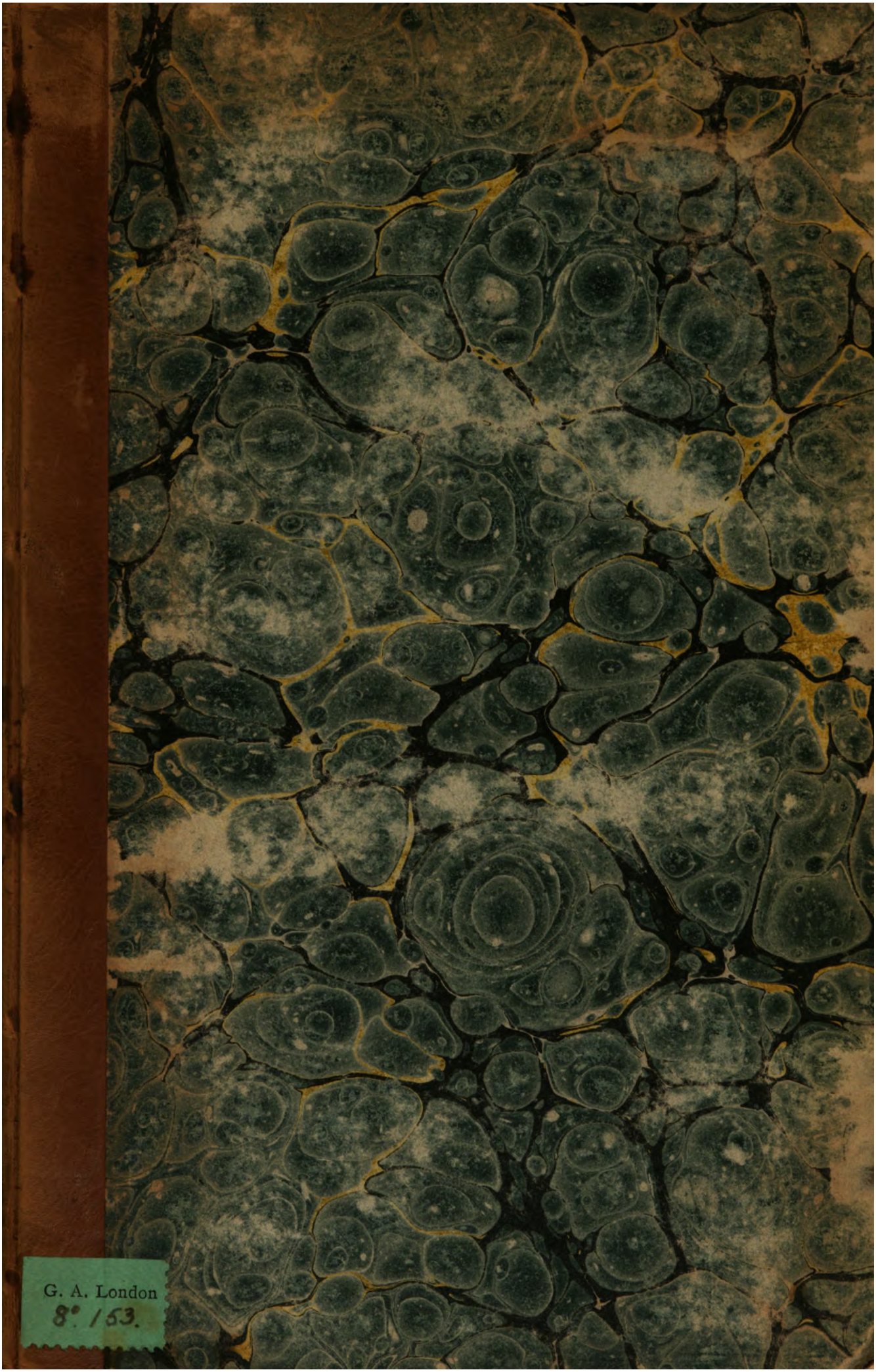

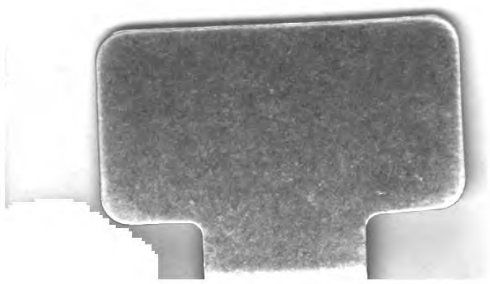

THE ABUSES

OF

THE NATIONAL GALLERY

WITH

THE LETTERS OF "A. G.," OF "THE OXFORD GRADUATE;"
THE DEFENCE OF MR. EASTLAKE, IN "THE DAILY NEWS,"
&c. &c.

AND REMARKS UPON THEM.

BY VERAX.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

OBSERVATIONS

ON

The Minutes of the Trustees

OF

THE NATIONAL GALLERY,

INCLUDING

MR. EASTLAKE'S REPORT.

BY VERAX.

LONDON:
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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE following Letters, most of which have appeared in the "*Times*" since the last vacation, are here again presented to the public, in order that all those who take an interest in the subject may have a full opportunity of judging of the whole of the charges which I have brought against the managers and keeper of the National Gallery. Their republication has moreover become an act of justice to myself, since many things which have been said by others, have been in several public papers attributed to me. As I find it difficult enough in the face of gross ignorance, monstrous arrogance, and unexampled stupidity, to maintain and enforce my own positions without encumbering myself with allies whose intentions I misdoubt, and whose ability I altogether deny, I hereby enable the reader to judge for what declarations I am responsible.*

* I am especially unambitious of having the weight of Mr. William Coningham's sayings saddled upon me. One paper goes so far as to call "Verax" Mr. Coningham's "first echo," whereas that gentleman only vouchsafed to announce the first of his discoveries on the 8th December, six weeks after his "first echo".

I have my suspicions that the abuses in question would have remained unnoticed till doomsday; had it depended on Mr. William Coningham's ingenuity to have detected them; and I will venture to suggest that his unqualified desertion to the ranks of the enemy would be a most joyful event, as his contradictory explosions might there be of some assistance to the true and consistent friends of Art, whereas at present he is not only an encumbrance to them but positively mischievous.

The task of a Public Censor which I have assumed on this occasion, was wholly unpremeditated, and it was not until after my first letter on "The Abuses of the National Gallery," that I determined to make a complete exposure of those facts which had come within my own personal knowledge. I however give the upholders of abuses notice that I have plenty more shafts in store. I had, it is true, written a letter last year against the "cleaning" and "restoring" which had been carried on during the vacation preceding the last, but as it was not published, it never would have entered my thoughts to have attempted another appeal to the public on the same subject, had it not been for such unprecedented and wholesale desecration as that of the last vacation. The sight of the "Peace and War" roused my indignation to the highest pitch; I wrote my first short letter to the "*Times*" on the very day of the re-opening of the Gallery, and the result of my subsequent examination of the "Bacchus and Ariadne," was not such as to allay the flame which had been kindled, as the injuries which have been inflicted on that noble painting, though not to be compared *in extent* with those of the "Peace and War," are very considerable, and in reality far more serious, on account of the infinitely greater importance of the work.

Those two numerous classes of "knaves concerned and pedants unconcerned" have, as was to be expected, denounced my language as violent, intemperate, and what not. My answer is that I have used *strong* expressions, and that I see no reason for withdrawing any one of them. I have on principle used such terms as I deemed most applicable to the facts. To cavil at words is the last resource of those who despair of refuting accusations. If these had been false, I very much doubt whether the charity of those worthies would extend to wishing I had advanced them more mildly. I feel, on the contrary, more inclined to suspect that they would be rejoiced to have an additional hold upon me. To the charge of "personality" against the

keeper, I beg to say, that as I had undertaken to expose the abuses, I could not consistently avoid exposing him as he is identified with one of the principal of them.* In reply to the absurd twaddle about "anonymous correspondents," I pledge myself that at the proper time, some one shall, if required, appear in his own name and person, to substantiate everything which has been asserted in these letters. My sole object (and those who cannot believe it are to be pitied) has been to expose, in the hope that they may be removed, the flagrant abuses which not only prevent the formation of a National Collection worthy of so great a country as England, but which also act as a fatal impediment to the production of such works as are worthy of the name of Fine Art.

Great works are the results of great conceptions, and great conceptions consist in the correct and original application of principles which none but great minds assisted by severe study can perform. If the tradition of these principles is lost, the conceptions of Artists become at once beggarly and fantastical, and their sympathies are all perverted. Had the Artists of this country come forward as one man, and joined in denouncing all the abuses which have been laid open, and in protesting against the sacrilege offered to the mighty works of their predecessors, there would have been some hope that they looked upon our National Gallery, not as a repository of curious specimens of a Taste exploded, but as the Palladium of all that is true in nature and laudable in Painting. If they persist in this tame submission, we must suppose them indifferent to these principles and consequently incapable of applying them, incapable of great or even true conceptions and of the works emanating from them.†

* Vide 12th grievance, Letter V.

† There are, however, I am happy to say, a few whose intelligence and candour are an exception to this general censure, and I would gladly use the permission which they have given me to mention their names, did I not trust that they would do themselves more adequate justice by the spontaneous avowal of their own convictions.

If from the body of Artists we appeal to the Academy, we find there, not indifference, but the liveliest zeal; for whom? for Titian, for Rubens, for Velasquez? No! but for Mr. Eastlake. R. A's. *in esse* are indignant at the violent attack upon their colleague, while R. A's. *in posse* who are still on their probationary diet of humility and subserviency, yelp in docile underkey to their masters, in defence of the keeper and his dignity.

My hope is in a general appeal like the present, for although I fear that there are but few men of sound taste, yet it is my firm conviction that they are in sufficient number to bring about a better order of things, if they will unite and actively co-operate to effect this great object. There are besides many honest and independent minds, which, though for the present unqualified to lead, will willingly lend every assistance in their power as soon as they shall have been convinced how they ought to act in this matter.

Extensive, nay, fundamental alterations must be made in the administration of our Museums;—the Government must pursue an enlightened course in the selection of *model*-works, and display them to the greatest advantage for public instruction, which will both impress on the minds of the rising generation of Artists what it is they are required to emulate, and enable the people to form a good taste by inspiring them with confidence in the works which are placed before them. England may then look forward to an age of revival which being quickened by the same soul will display the same features as the age of Michael Angelo; for even then in its highest manifestations it was recognized as the same spirit which had animated an earlier generation by him who so ably remarked: *O lo spirito di Donato opera in Buonaroti; O quello di Buonaroti anticipò di operare in Donato.*

VERAX.

THE ABUSES

OF

THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

&c. &c.

I.

From The Times, Thursday, October 26th 1846.

THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,

I BEG to represent to you that, should the present pernicious system with regard to our national pictures be continued, in a very few years those noble works of the great masters, which we have collected at so much expense, will be utterly destroyed.

I visited the National Gallery yesterday morning on its re-opening, and to my great surprise and indignation I found the finest Rubens we possess, viz: "Peace and War," presented by the Marquis of Stafford, completely flayed.—I know no more appropriate word to designate the shameful manner in which this splendid work has been treated during the last holydays.

To close the gallery for so long a period is very bad management, but that, in addition to being deprived of the study of our pictures annually six consecutive weeks,* there should be during that time persons actively labouring to deprive us of

* From the middle of September to the end of October.

them altogether, is a question which demands strict and public inquiry. If the gallery were always kept open, as under proper management it would be, the public would be better enabled to watch the proceedings of the persons intrusted with the care of the pictures, and the work of destruction might perhaps be prevented from being carried on wholesale, as at present. To return, however, from this digression.

The "Peace and War," so pre-eminently rich and harmonious in colour, is now almost as remarkably crude and discordant. With characteristic ignorance the fine rich glazings have been scoured off without the slightest regard to or perception of proportion, so that we now have the distant objects most offensively confusing themselves with those in the foreground.

The fine Cuyp has been treated in a similar manner, and such is the rage for destruction that the Velasquez, one of the new purchases, has also been subjected to the dreadful ordeal of the cleaner's hands. This picture was as remarkable for its fine preservation as for its noble qualities as a work of art. Those who were well acquainted with this picture before its recent misfortune will find, instead of its pure and solemn tone, a chalky film spread over it. The same system was pursued with regard to the Penrice Guidos, especially towards "Susanna and the Elders," which was scrubbed quite raw and repainted.

I am acquainted with most of the finest pictures in Europe, and I have seen the dreadful havoc committed on many of them, but I never saw a more flagrant case than that of the "Peace and War," nor one that more urgently called for interference. It will, however, be fortunate if this strong case prove the means of saving other great works from a similar fate.

Yours obediently,

VERAX.

Tuesday, October 27.

II.

From The Times, November 19th 1846.

THE PURCHASES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,

THE establishment of a National Gallery is a formal recognition on the part of the Government which underakes it of the powerful influence which the fine arts were intended by Providence to exercise on mankind. The only way by which a Legislature can render this influence effective is by exempting, as far as possible, the principles of sound taste and genuine art from the caprices and fluctuations of fashion. The selection, therefore, of works of art is a question of national importance. Deeply impressed with these views, I venture to offer a few remarks on the purchases made for the National Gallery since the year 1842.

It must be evident to every reflecting person that works of the highest character—that is, works which illustrate in a consummate degree any one or more of the great principles of art, contain not only the greatest amount of instruction, but, to a mind educated into a perception of their beauties, pleasure of the most exquisite kind.

Whether such views have influenced the choice of our pictures since the year 1842, your readers will be better able to judge when they are informed that every addition, save one, belongs to an age whose works, so far from possessing that consummate excellence which is essential to a *model*, are but imperfect rehearsals of their great predecessors, tinged with the advancing decay. The exception is the portrait of a Doge by Giovanni Bellini, an artist whom I sincerely admire, but whose fitness for imparting the great lessons of his craft I shall only then acknowledge when I have been convinced that the contemplation of an imperfect, and therefore unsuccessful experiment, is more instructive than the same exhibited in its complete and satisfactory results.

Not only have these works been bought at enormous prices, but during the same period undoubted pictures of first rate consequence, by some of the greatest masters which might have been procured at considerably less expense, were refused or neglected.

Here is a list of the pictures purchased since 1842, together with their prices:

	£	s.
"Doge Loredano," G. Bellini	630	0
"A Jewish Rabbi," Rembrandt	430	10
"The Infant Christ and St. John," Guido ..	409	0
"Portrait of Gerard Dow," G. Dow	131	5
The *Libel* on Holbein, ...	600	0
"Lot and his Daughters," Guido.....	1680	0
"Susanna and the Elders," Guido	1260	0
"The Judgement of Paris," Rubens.....	4200	0
"Spanish Boar Hunt," Velasquez	2200	0
"The Temptation of St. Anthony," A. Caracci	735	0
	£12,275	15*

A further sum of £3500 was offered, but fortunately not accepted, for two other pictures very inferior to some of these.

Of the abovementioned pictures none exhibit in any way first-rate excellence; some are below mediocrity; and three, namely, the "Infant Christ and St. John," the "G. Dow," and the *Libel* on Holbein,—would reflect no credit on the meanest amateur, and serve only to mark the utter incapacity and extravagance of those who selected them, qualities still further evinced by the fact that several of these works had been previously offered to private persons at much lower prices than we have paid for them. I was present when that *Libel* on Holbein was offered for £300 by the dealer who sold it to the Gallery.

The following, among other well-known and authentic works, by some of the greatest masters of the brightest period of art,

* Besides the sum of £12,275 15*s.* fees have been paid to dealers for *valuing* some of the above Pictures, but owing to the defective state of the official Catalogue, I am not able to give exact information as to the amount of public money thrown away for this purpose.

have likewise changed hands since 1842, and might, at a comparatively small outlay, have ennobled the walls of the National Gallery, and reflected the highest credit on the country:— "The Holy Family," by Sebastiano del Piombo, £1,100, from Sir T. Baring's collection; "The Virgin and Child," Raphael, less than £1,000, Lord Methuen's collection; "Tarquin and Lucretia," by Titian, formerly in the collection of Charles I., and sold by the executors of Joseph Buonaparte in 1844 for £700. I have mentioned these in particular, because they are well known. Must not every true and enlightened lover of art feel grieved on comparing what we have with what we might have had? The united cost of "The Infant Christ and St. John," of "The G. Dow," and of the portrait, "painted by an artist contemporary with Holbein, and resembling him in manner," as we have it in the new catalogue, would more than have sufficed to secure either of the above noble works. The prices of the last two alone exceeds that of Titian's "Tarquin and Lucretia." Some objection was urged against the *immorality* of the subject of "Tarquin and Lucretia." The immorality is in the mind which could perceive any indelicacy in Titian's noble conception of this subject. It is equally strange and unfortunate that no such scruples prevented the extravagant purchase of "Lot and his Daughters," and of a *second* "Susanna and the Elders," in spite of our already possessing a better picture by L. Caracci of the same subject. Surely the representation of the fiery and unbridled passions of youth is not more scandalous or demoralizing than that of the impotent lasciviousness of age!

If a great work is to be rejected because its author has not taken due precautions lest the crude pedant should be choked with an anachronism, or the sickly sentimentalist should swoon away at the expression of suffering, or the puling religionist be shocked by human depravity, let us, in the name of common sincerity, speak no more in admiration of the great spirits of the past, whether in poetry, painting, or sculpture.

But we are not yet come to this pass. There is, I would fain hope, a sufficient number of men of sound judgment in this country to warrant the assertion that the national intelligence,

as regards the arts, is greatly misrepresented by the conduct pursued of late years in the National Gallery.

Our Gallery had a glorious beginning. The "Resurrection of Lazarus," the united effort of Michael Angelo and Sebastian del Piombo, was in itself a colossal foundation. The presence of such a work ought so to have elevated our thoughts as to have placed us beyond the possibility of descending to such pictures as some of those purchased of late years. Compare the earlier with the more recent part of the collection. What a falling off! Every truly noble work of art, exiled from the country of its birth through the degeneracy or poverty of its first possessors, ought to find a welcome reception and final asylum in the National Gallery of England.

Indifference to works of the first order is moreover flagrant injustice to our artists, and especially when we are offering premiums to induce them to pursue the highest walks of art. Must it not be discouraging to every noble-minded student to see that excellence neglected, of which, if he could but promise to himself the scantiest portion, he would feel that he had not lived in vain? Must he not foresee, at the end of a long life of laborious study and self-denial, the probability of neglect and a broken spirit?

The baneful spirit of ignorance which presides over one of the most important of our national establishments is but the continuation of that which deprived us of the drawings of Michael Angelo and Raphael, the most stupendous collection in the world. It first allowed it to be dismembered, whereby part went to Holland, and then, instead of partially redeeming the error by securing the remainder, with characteristic obstinacy and folly it rejected that also, though still a collection of first-rate importance. This, with the three fine pictures quoted above, would have cost us considerably less than the pictures added to the Gallery since 1842, which should never have been thought of till the others were secured, and not even *then* unless at more moderate prices.

I will conclude with a few remarks on the hanging of the pictures. The *Spectator* compares it to an auction-room, and with good reason. One of the most wonderful productions of

human genius, and by far the finest picture we possess, "The Resurrection of Lazarus," is hung in the very worst light in the room, and, consistently enough, a poor but most expensive one is in the best. Almost an entire wall is sacrificed to the low-class pictures of the late bequest, while Titian's "Ganymede," and "Concert," the "Giulia Gonzaga," some N. Poussins, &c., are either thrust into dark corners, or hung so high as to be utterly useless to the student. There is sufficient room on the line for all our best pictures, but not so long as we perversely keep the inferior ones there. Is the second "Susanna and the Elders," for ever to usurp the place of Titian's noble "Ganymede?" How much longer are the Lawrences and the Wests to remain as monuments of our ignorance and conceit, while so many good pictures require their room? Every addition, however poor, thrusts some fine work out of reach. It ought to be a fundamental rule, that no inferior picture shall usurp the place of a better.

This, Sir, is a subject worthy of your readers' earnest consideration, and I feel confident that your powerful assistance will go very far to remedy the evils complained of and deeply regretted by the enlightened friends of art.

I remain, Sir, yours obediently,

VERAX.

November 10*th* 1846.

P.S.—In a former letter I strongly animadverted on the shameful treatment which several fine pictures had received during the last vacation, but I had not at that time extended my observations to the "Bacchus and Ariadne." I now feel called upon to denounce the injuries inflicted on that great and important picture also. Some parts have been scraped raw, and others have been repainted. The former process, especially, has had the effect of altering the apparent position of some of the objects. Considering the much greater importance of the work, this is the worst case of all, and it ought to be the last of a series of barbarisms obstinately persevered in for a long time past, and by no means confined to onr National Gallery.

All repainting is inadmissable, because it is diametrically opposed to reason. Great works are interesting and valuable for

those parts only which can be relied upon as genuine, and they have suffered more from the ignorant and abortive attempts at what is commonly and most falsely called " restoration," than from any other cause.

Every miscalled " restoration" is made to cover more or less of the original, in order to disguise what never ought to have been attenpted. Unlike the interpolations of a written work, it cannot be removed without great danger to the text. It is as absurd to repaint any part of a Raphael or a Titian, as it would be to putty up the corrosions of the Ilyssus. Every means should be employed to preserve a great work, but " restoration" is but a specious synonyme of *destruction.*

III.

From The Times, Thursday, December 10, 1846.

THE ABUSES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,

WHEN, in my former letters, I endeavoured to direct your readers' attention to the irreparable injuries inflicted on some of the most precious works of art in the National Gallery, I felt that my task would be incomplete unless I could suggest the most effectual means of preventing the recurrence of such Vandalisms, by letting the public know at whose suggestion, and under whose authority, they had been committed.

As no picture can be touched without the express sanction of the keeper, the person holding that responsible office must be necessarily best qualified to give the requisite information; it happens, therefore, very opportunely, that we are indebted to that gentleman himself for the names, not only of the subordinate agents in these achievements, but also for pointing out to us the master mind which directed them. The document in which we are favoured with this information is entitled "The

National Gallery. Observations on the unfitness of the present building for its purpose. In a letter to the Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart., by Charles Lock Eastlake, R.A., Keeper of the National Gallery. London: Clowes and Sons, Stamford-street, 1845." At page 17, Mr. Eastlake, after complaining of the smallness of the building, enlarges upon "the want of spacious and well lighted rooms for cleaning and restoring pictures," as a "more serious evil." "Such rooms should," he says, "if possible, be on the same floor with the Gallery, so as to avoid all risk in moving the pictures. The operation of cleaning the paintings could then be conveniently carried on whenever it might be required, the Gallery being deprived for a short period of one picture at a time. But under present circumstances it is only during the vacation in the autumn that such operations can be undertaken. The pictures having remained many years without having been cleaned before the last vacation, it was impossible to complete the work within the few weeks allowed, the cleaning of some was necessarily postponed for another year." To this we find the following note:—"*I may here be permitted to express my entire satisfaction at the result of the labours of Mr. Seguier and Mr. T. Boden Brown, who, at the period in question, by direction of the trustees, and under my daily superintendence, cleaned a considerable number of pictures in the Gallery.*"*

To tourists who come back with a taste, to ladies and gentlemen who have a talent for drawing, to men who look on art as a means of gain and advancement—in short, to all dealers, drivellers, and *dilettanti*, this will seem a very natural boast, and in no way contradictory to the dread of "risk," and the anxiety for the "careful preservation" of the pictures elsewhere expressed. A more intelligent class will perhaps look upon these statements as specimens of a ludi-

* "The result of the labours" which so especially excited Mr. Eastlake's enthusiasm was the reduction of the four-thousand guinea Rubens "The Judgment of Paris" to comparative monotony, and the skinning and repainting of the two two-thousand eight hundred guinea Guidos purchased from the Penrice and *Buchanan* Collections.

crous inconsistency, and enjoy the event as a good subject for banter and ridicule. But those who are truly passionate for art, and make it the business of their lives, who alone are judges of this case—though all are interested in it—will feel nothing but unmixed indignation at the conduct of a public officer, who, in utter ignorance of the principles on which those works were painted, and with that still more culpable ignorance which blinded him to his own incapacity, suffered the works of a Titian, of a Rubens, and of a Velasquez to be so handled that the rich glazings, and masterly touches with which these authors rivalled the harmony, saliency, and roundness of nature, have been removed as *dirt*—who, mistaking the tints of the painter for the incrustations of age, has brought into offensive nearness that which had been toned down into its proper distance, and thus made the colouring and the drawing falsify each other—nay, has put the very colouring in contradiction to itself. But the worst is yet to come. In the same pamphlet the author expresses his regret at not being able to carry on "such operations" on a more extensive scale, and pledges himself to their continuance. A part of this pledge was fearfully redeemed during the last vacation; whether Mr. Eastlake should be left in a situation which will enable him to fulfil the remainder is for the public to decide.

I had intended to confine my remarks for the present to the subject of the mutilated pictures, but the instances of the mismanagement of our National Gallery in all its branches, from the destruction of some of the finest works down to the composition of the catalogue, are so flagrant, and the public letter from which I have quoted bears so immediately upon some of them, that I will venture to trespass on your attention by a few more selections from that document, and a little further commentary of my own.

Mr. Eastlake's second objection to the present building is the "insufficient space for the due exhibition of even the present collection of paintings." The present building is certainly insufficient for such a gallery as England ought to possess, and will, I hope, one day acquire, despite the present unfavourable prospects; but would any intelligent stranger suspect "insuffi-

ciency of space," on finding nearly an entire wall sacrificed to the low class pictures of the late bequest? At page 7, Mr. Eastlake finds that "in consequence, even of the addition of two pictures of moderate dimensions," &c., "other works, which were before hung near the eye, have been unavoidably placed at too great a distance to be duly seen, or to be of use to the students," &c. That Mr. Eastlake should find it unavoidable to displace superior works to make room for inferior ones, is an instance of that gracious preference for the weaker side, which, however, it may move our admiration when practised in social life, is apt when applied to matters of logic or taste to provoke a very different feeling. We agree with Mr. Eastlake that the "display" of the pictures for "the public advantage" is a point "deserving the attention of Government." But how can he reconcile this zeal for "public advantage" with his present distribution of the "insufficient space," by which a whole wall of the Gallery is made to look like a temple of Neptune or Æsculapius, decorated with its votive daubs, while the great masters are removed to some dark corner to await their doom until the dread fiat goes forth to "restore" them.

From page 23 we learn that the author is in great anxiety lest "foreigners should entertain erroneous judgments respecting the state of art in this country," &c. The religious preservation of works of consummate excellence, and the judgment displayed in the additions to its museums, will ever be the sure and only infallible test of a nation's refinement in the arts; the highest appreciation and the greatest powers of production having always been contemporary. If we are, indeed, afraid of the judgments of intelligent men, whether foreigners or Englishmen, and are alive to the degradation of being thought a nation of barbarians, let us no longer permit the reckless destruction of our finest works, nor tolerate the systematic perversity which is every year displayed in the purchase of inferior pictures; but I again assert that the national taste, as regards the arts, is shamefully misrepresented in the conduct of the rulers in Trafalgar Square. It is said, however, and I trust with truth, that some of the trustees disapprove these proceedings; but, until they openly avow their disapprobation, they

must bear that portion of the blame which ought to attach to every one who lends his name to stupid and mischievous practices.

The last passage I shall quote from Mr. Eastlake is in the prophetical style. At page 7, "every specimen," says he, "of art in a national collection should, perhaps, (perhaps!) be assumed to be fit to challenge inspection, and to be worthy of being well displayed. It is hoped that there is little danger of pictures being purchased for the nation which will not bear this test." The letter is dated May. Before the end of July, within two months of the prophecy, Mr. Eastlake, with the assistance of an "eminent German friend," had the luck to stumble on the *Libel* on Holbein, name and all, for £600. The name having been found too much for the money, it was conscientiously taken out, and, I suppose, returned to the dealer. The present is a favourable opportunity for giving the public the full particulars connected with this interesting acquisition. It must not be for a moment supposed that things were done in a hurry. Mr. Eastlake was not a man to be taken by storm. Although he and his "eminent German friend" had discovered and enthusiastically admired this beautiful work, it was not until after two months' possession, distressing anxiety, and indefatigable examination, that the bargain was concluded; "*Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem.*" As I have before stated, it was offered in my presence to a private person for £300; but *that* would have been a price unworthy of the nation. The more dignified sum of £800 was, therefore, demanded, and, after a little delicate flirtation, it was secured for £600. So great was the rejoicing on this memorable occasion, that the dealer was even complimented for having favoured us with so precious an article, and the fine Vandyke horses were displaced to make room for it. But, alas for the fallibility of "eminent" Germans, and the *gullibility* of "eminent" Englishmen! within a fortnight after its installation (horrible to relate!) this admirable production, this *signed* "Holbein," was discovered to be a mistake. Down it came; entreaties and threats were used alternately to induce the dealer to return the money, but to no purpose. In vain did Mr. Eastlake endeavour to coax

the obdurate man with the splendid offer of £100 on the part of the trustees, and an additional £50 out of his own pocket, to take back the *Libel.* The "tremendous sacrifice of 25 *per cent.* under prime cost," was obstinately refused. All this Mr. Eastlake *did*, and it is but right that the public should be informed of his disinterested conduct on this memorable occasion. He made, however, one little mistake; for, having been informed that the picture was not worth more than £40, his offer was really very like asking the man to give him £600 for £190. Had he been modestly requested to take back the picture and return £40, he would probably have consented, and the catalogue would have been wanting in one of the richest gems which adorn that repertory of graceful scholarship. How George Robinsesque is the description which heralds its re-appearance! In this we are told that it is "*painted by an artist contemporary with* HOLBEIN, *and resembling him in manner.*" The old compromise of a "cousin german that played the German flute," is the only model I know for this species of commendation. It was during the secession that the "I. Holbein," on the background was rubbed out. The picture was subsequently placed on the line, but it now offers itself to the admiring gaze of a grateful public in its original position, and is still thought, by those who think *ex-officio*, of more "public advantage" than Vandyke's horses.

How much longer is this trifling to continue? How much longer are idle *dilettanti* to be our caterers of art? Let us not be told that many of these personages are distinguished for energy and ability in other pursuits or professions; their being so offers of itself a strong presumption of their insufficiency. It is not to be expected that the Muse before whom Phidias and Michael Angelo laid their colossal minds, as offerings which could only become worthy of her acceptance after the intense labour and passionate meditation of a whole life, will deign to accept as her votaries the jaded intellects of lawyers and politicians, who treat her arts as a pastime, and too often merely as a source of gratification to their personal vanity.

I would fain hope that the growing interest which attaches to the subject of national education, will not suffer this most im-

portant branch of that question to be any longer at the mercy of a mixed *coterie* of *dilettanti* and picture-dealers; for, surely, *that* is no small part of national education which teaches men to look upon the face of nature with an intelligent eye and a feeling heart; and this is the true province of painting, sculpture, and architecture. It is because men will not recognize this truth, but assume that they can learn, or have learnt, from nature, that which they are afterwards to verify in the works of her imitators, that the taste of our age is so false, and its performances so mean. The poets and the historians of Greece *learnt* from her Phidias and her Apelles instead of *criticising* them; and these would have disdained to ask the opinion of the wisest and greatest men, who had only the moments of leisure to bestow on that, which had to themselves been the serious occupation of life. If our national repositories of art are not to be regarded as great educational establishments, let us, in the name of common sense, spend no more money on pictures; let us rather close the Gallery, and advertise the sale of its contents throughout Europe. Let the thousands we shall yet have to spend in finishing an asylum worthy of the works of Phidias, be applied to some humbler purpose.

I trust, Sir, that I have made it sufficiently clear, that the perverse acquisition of inferior pictures, the neglect of great works, and still more the desecration of those we possess, loudly call for public and searching inquiry. The office of guardian of the National Gallery is the most important artistic appointment in the country, and it ought not to be lightly bestowed. It can only be efficiently filled by a man of comprehensive and independent mind, and acquainted, as much at least as can be expected in these degenerate days, with the theory and practice of the great masters whose works he is appointed to protect. We must not have one whose chief reliance is on Passavant and German hand-books, and who judges Raphael by the *measure of a panel.* Whatever may be the requisites for such an office, ignorance and "flunkeyism" are not among the number.

I remain, Sir, yours obediently,

VERAX.

December.

IV.

It was not until the 8th of December,* nearly two months after the *Times*, the *Spectator*, the *Examiner*, the *Britannia*, the *Atlas*, &c.† had repeatedly and earnestly called public attention to the fact, that a gentleman signing himself "William Coningham," condescended to inform, not the Public, but Mr. Eastlake, above all others, that "profane hands had irreparably injured pictures that had been preserved with the utmost care for centuries," &c., and called upon *him* (!) "to stand forward in their defence." After nicknaming Sebastiano del Piombo, the "awe-inspiring *Piombo*,"‡ this, his first note, ends with something about "the *glowing* Coreggios," which, in their present state may, indeed, form a dangerous contrast to the *chalky absurdities of Mr. Turner, or to the pictures in the Royal Academy.*"

In note the second, this same gentleman, after encouraging "Verax" with a splendid compliment,§ inveighs against Mr. Eastlake's "*stupidity* of mistaking a portrait of the younger Claessens, for a work by Holbein." The learned distinction he

* "Times," December 8th, 1846.

† The friends of art are greatly indebted to the Editors of the above mentioned papers for their consistency and intelligence on this occasion. "The Spectator," especially, has been distinguished both for ability and perseverance.

‡ In nothing is the acquaintance of our *dilettanti* with the Old Masters more conspicuous than in the familiar manner in which they frequently nickname them. Sebastiano *del Piombo* took his surname from the office he held of keeper of the Papal signet, in allusion to the *lead* of the seal. Now, although, Mr. Coningham in calling Sebastiano del Piombo, in his playful, friendly way, simply, "*Piombo*," or "awe-inspiring Piombo," (awe inspiring Lead), undoubtedly proves his great intimacy with that master, it does not follow that every whippersnapper has a right to take such liberties. I, therefore, beg to inform these, that not even the most crafty Italian would ever suspect that "*Piombo*" alone, meant anything but *lead*. I would, humbly suggest to those *dilettanti* who enjoy the privilege of bestowing nicknames on Sebastiano del Piombo, that "*Pipes*," or "awe-inspiring Pipes" would be at once more endearing and more English, and consequently much better understood in London.

§ "Sir.—The gross mismanagement of the National Gallery has been so completely and so ably exposed by 'Verax,' in your paper of the 10th inst. as to require no further commentary, &c."—*Times*, Dec. 16th.

draws between the "Low Dutch or Flemish," and the "High Dutch or German School," is worthy of the most attentive study. He then proceeds to say, "Thus not only did Mr. Eastlake display *total ignorance*," &c., "*but a want of common acuteness* in failing to detect" the forgery of the signature I. HOLBEIN, and "the extensive restorations on the background. How then, I ask, can such a man be entrusted to purchase pictures for a National Museum, or to decide whether those which have passed through the hands of his assistants have or have not been overcleaned, and then restored to conceal the injury?" &c. "*Mr. Eastlake must either acknowledge his incapacity, or become obnoxious to graver accusations.*" His proposal to decide the question by an appeal to Mr. T. Boden Brown, a "professional cleaner" (one of those whose "labours" of the preceding year had so excited Mr. Eastlake's enthusiasm), and his anxiety lest the picture of "Peace and War," if now "valued," should be worth less *money*, are of an equally exalted character.

Note the third* begins by cautiously making Mr. Beckford "nickname the present picture-cleaner to the National Gallery, the Master of the Skinners' Company!" "The formal sanction" given to Mr. Eastlake by Mr. Mulready, Mr. Etty, and Mr. Leslie, he considers "as the first clear evidence of the design of Sir Martin Shee and of the Academicians to persuade the Public that the qualities in which the painters of that Establishment (the Academy) are totally deficient, &c. are merely the result of time and mastic varnish." Mr. Turner is a *second* time attacked in his "Limpet on the Rock;" and a *third* time by being told that "his pictures are the colour of *dirty plaster*." "The Trustees and the Public at large" are entreated "not to allow themselves to be misled *by these interested parties*." Sir Martin Shee is then held up as an object of contempt, "*as well known to have ridiculed the drawings of Michael Angelo and of Raffaelle;*" we are informed that "the criticisms of Sir William Ross are become a *standing joke* in the Eternal City; and as the strongest evidence of these gentlemen's *incapacity*,"

* "Times," January 7, 1847.

he appeals "to their own exhibition rooms." This mild epistle concludes by saying that "as long as a Member of this body, assisted by *a master skinner*, continues to be the keeper of the National Gallery, so long will the pictures be in danger;" and that nothing should be wanting, he calls them all "*harpies*."

The above specimens of the powerful arguments adduced by Mr. William Coningham, and of his delicate forbearance from *unnecessary* personality, will have prepared the reader for the following note, which appeared in *The Times*, on the very next day, Friday, January 8th.—

"*To the Editor of The Times.*

"SIR,

"May I beg publicly to state, through the medium of your columns, that I am not 'Verax,' and that I have not the slightest acquaintance with that gentleman, *whoever he may be?* I also think the *personalities* he indulges in only calculated to injure a good cause.

"I remain, &c.

"WILLIAM CONINGHAM." *

I will here observe, that three of the persons whom Mr. William Coningham has thus honoured with his especial notice, namely, Sir Martin Shee, Sir William Ross, and Mr. Turner, had not, at the time the above notes were written, taken any part in the controversy. The two latter gentlemen have not, even since, to my knowledge, made themselves in any way obnoxious. The mere fact of their not being great painters, does not give any person a right to insult them. What Mr. Coningham is pleased to call "personalities," have been supported by such overwhelming facts, that they would make the harshest terms sink into comparative insignificance, and the persons I have attacked in my letters are so intimately connected with the abuses I have exposed, that it was impossible to separate them. But wanton abuse is the surest mark of ignorance and depraved motives, and it was, therefore, a piece of very superfluous precaution, on Mr. Coningham's part, to have disclaimed

* So scrupulous was Mr. Coningham in not wishing to usurp the credit due to "Verax," that he even put himself to the inconvenience of addressing another note, to the same effect, to "The Spectator." I trust he will persevere in observing the golden rule, of never assuming any merit to which he is not entitled.

the authorship of the letters signed " Verax." Still more difficult is it to explain how any one, at the very time he was meditating his own apostacy, should have been so anxious about the " good cause," as to deprecate personalities, because, forsooth, " they were calculated to injure it." Perhaps he thinks that a good cause is not likely to be injured by his inconsistency, or desertion from it: if so, it is the truest judgment he has ever formed, and I heartily concur with him in it. But it was not enough for him that no one should confound him with "Verax;"—he must not be supposed to have " *the slightest acquaintance* with that gentleman, *whoever* he may be"—that is, " 'Verax' may be any gentleman you please, but I have not the slightest acquaintance with him—I dont know any *gentleman.*"—His words either mean that, or they mean *nothing;* and in the latter case they have many more such sentences in the productions of the same writer to keep them company.

The next scene in which Mr. Coningham appears is one of a sudden and miraculous conversion. On the very day after his " wanton attack" (Vide Sir M. Shee's letter)* had appeared, he was compelled to write as follows:—

" *To the Editor of The Times.*

" Sir,

I am requested formally to contradict a statement in my last letter on the subject of the Gallery, that Sir Martin Shee 'had ridiculed the drawings by Michael Angelo and Raffaelle.' I much regret having been led into this false assertion, of the truth of which I was at that time firmly convinced.

" I remain your obedient Servant,

" William Coningham.

"*Brighton,* Jan. 8, 1847."†

The letter by " Veritas" (*Times,* Jan. 13), evidently written by some one desirous that the truth should be known, very seasonably chastised Mr. Coningham for his hasty compliance with Sir Martin Shee's " formal request."

It is necessary to state that Mr. Coningham had frequently heard Mr. Woodburn repeat the expressions attributed to Sir M. Shee by " Veritas," and had more than once expressed his

* " Times," January 15th.

† This did not appear till January 11th.

belief in the truth of Mr. Woodburn's statement. "Veritas" has however omitted the most pithy part of the dialogue, which will prove a valuable addition to the anecdotes of "eminent" British Painters. It runs thus: Sir Martin Shee having selected the drawing of S. Cecilia, by Raphael, as the subject of his critique, observed, "Why, many of my young men could do as well." To which Mr. Woodburn, if we are to believe him, replied, "I have heard, Sir Martin, that Shakspeare, Milton, Virgil, &c. were not great poets, but I never thought it the fault of those great men." Upon this, according to Mr. Woodburn, the late Mr. Phillips, R. A., who was with Sir Martin Shee at the time, remarked, "You had it there, Sir Martin." Mr. Coningham made his public apology to Sir Martin Shee, thus accusing Mr. Woodburn of having made *a false assertion*, without having previously communicated to him the receipt of Sir M. Shee's request. Such conduct requires no comment.

Mr. Coningham's last epistle, (*Times*, Jan. 25,) in which he says, that his "opinion upon the system of painting adopted by *certain* Members of the Royal Academy, who have abandoned their early and careful manner, remains unchanged," is another interesting pledge that he is fast approaching that happy state to which the Pecksniff, who makes his monthly appearance under the cognizance of the only *virtuous* Gambling Society in the country, has so happily predicted his return. "*That a gentleman having the reputation of being a learned connoisseur in ancient Art should be so partial and so bigoted to the admiration of its remains, as to doat on the delapidations which time and other causes have inflicted, rather than on its pristine beauties—and that he should be so deficient in good feeling for the glory of his country, and its rising school, as to anathematise it as a gathering of 'chalky absurdities'—is much to be regretted; but we think Mr. Conyngham will hereafter withdraw the intemperate phrase, when others will have forgotten the hasty enthusiasm that gave rise to its utterance.*"* As Mr. Coningham now informs us that only "*certain* members of the Royal Academy" have adopted "a system of painting" of which

* "Art Union Journal," Jan. 1, 1847.

he disapproves, and as he has already favoured us with the names of these, I trust he will soon point out to us those other members of that august body whose "system of painting" he finds so congenial, that we, who anxiously look forward to that blaze of light which can alone emanate from the genuine *dilettante*, may know whom it is lawful to admire.

VERAX.

V.

From The Times, Wednesday, December 30th, 1846, and re-published therein entire the following day.

THE ABUSES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,

I SUPPOSE that your readers will have sufficiently perceived from the statements in my last letter but one, (which have not yet been refuted,) that in the purchases made for the National Gallery since 1842, that plainest rule of economy has been violated, which common sense dictates to all, and which Franklin has embodied in that pithy sentence, "Nothing is cheap that you do not want." But there is a refinement of silly extravagance, an embellishment of common recklessness, which not even Franklin had anticipated—I mean the endeavour to add a zest to the sense of possession, by the self-imposition of an unnecessary price for an unnecessary article. Those who doubt of the existence of so singularly morbid a propensity, will be surprised to learn, that the trustees and their professional adviser, Mr. Eastlake, have been so deeply possessed with this unhappy craving, that they have, in some cases, paid for a picture *more than double* the sum for which it had been offered to private persons. It will be seen, from what I am about to relate, that the wasteful excess of expenditure on three of the ten pictures purchased since the appointment of

Mr. Eastlake to the office of keeper, would have been alone *more* than sufficient to have secured to us, within the same period, among other fine works of the best age of art, Titian's great historical picture of "Tarquin and Lucretia," formerly in the collection of Charles I.; and the "Methuen Raphael"—works I have elsewhere quoted.

If we must, indeed, submit to have inferior works annually thrust upou us, we should at least be allowed the reasonable consolation of paying as little as possible for them; but it is useless to expect even this, while there is so little chance of any picture finding its way into the public Gallery until it has been long hawked about the town, by way of testing its originality, and till both trustees and keeper have been successfully "earwigged" (I use a disreputable, though significant word, to designate a disreputable practice) by the agents of the owner. I have already stated that the *Libel* on Holbein, that prodigious specimen of the incompetence of "competent persons," was offered in my presence for £300; but I now know that it might have been had for £250 of the same dealer who sold it to the Gallery; and I have also learnt that the price paid for it by "Parliament," was 600 guineas, instead of £600. Is it not comfortable to reflect that so choice a "specimen of art," so "fit," according to Mr. Eastlake's happy prediction, "to challenge inspection," and so "worthy of being well displayed," has cost us *only* £380 more than was necessary?

At the sale of Mr. Penrice's collection in 1844, the trustees decided on giving the very moderate sum of £5,580 for "the Judgment of Paris," by Rubens, and that "Lot and his Daughters," by Guido. It was surprising that another work of the latter master, "Susanna and the Elders," should, in spite of the strict propriety of its *moral* and the unassuming tameness of its treatment, have been overlooked by such congenial purchasers. But, that *Deus ex machinâ*," of embarrassed *dilettanti*, an ever-vigilant and high-spirited dealer, was waking while they slumbered. He purchased and kept the picture by him until he should be able to bring Mr. Keeper Eastlake to a just sense of its value. Within a year his eloquence prevailed, and his patriotism was rewarded: for less than £850 he had rescued his

prize; for 1,200 guineas he laid it at the feet of a grateful country.* Little more than half of this sum might have procured us Titian's "Tarquin and Lucretia," but *that* was an "immoral" subject. Could Titian have foreseen an age of decencies and mediocrities which would reject a picture whereon he had expended the might of his genius and the riches of his experience, because the subject was "immoral," surely his disdain of so worthless a posterity, his disgust at a vision of such pruriency and imbecility combined, would have at once extinguished the "original and fiery virtue" within him, and have paralized his godlike powers.

Thus, Sir, we see that on the "Susanna and the Elders"—the first purchase since the *libel* on Holbein—we have another trifling unnecessary excess of more than £410. In the discussion which took place in the House of Commons on the latter valuable acquisition, many of your readers will doubtless remember the declaration of Sir Robert Peel, that "the trustees intended in future to *fortify* their opinions by the advice of eminent artists and experienced dealers." We are now, therefore, I presume, enjoying the blessings of that ingenious device; but would it not be an additional relish if we were informed of the *names* of the "eminent artists" who counselled the purchase of this "Susanna and the Elders?" It is reported that the "experienced dealer," who sagaciously valued it at 1,200 guineas, was rewarded with 2½ *per cent.*, nay, some say 10 *per cent.* on the purchase money. The charge for valuation, whatever it may have been, as it was incurred through Mr. Eastlake's inexperience, was doubtless defrayed by him, and it therefore concerns us but little. The touching instance of generosity which he displayed in the offer of £50 out of his own pocket, to induce the dealer to take back the picture "resembling" HOLBEIN in "manner," leaves us no room to question it.

The third and last purchase which I intend to notice for the present, is that of "Philip IV. of Spain hunting the Wild Boar," by Velasquez. This is, indeed, a most pleasant history,

* It is necessary to bear in mind that the beautiful "*new*" appearance which this picture now presents, is owing to Mr. Eastlake having superintended the removal of the "dirt," and the repainting of the cracks.

and one whose novelty will, unless I am greatly deceived, prove not more striking to the public than to some of the heroes engaged in it. The trustees and the keeper, totally unconscious of the strings which regulate their movements, are, it is said, to the present moment, under the soothing impression that a noble act of patriotism, on their part, has prevented the exportation of this picture. They are still, perhaps, enjoying in blissful ignorance, the consolatory thought that it is free from the degradation of having been hawked about in any other country besides their own. Alas, that so charming a vision should ever be dispelled! It is, nevertheless, currently reported that it had only just returned from an unsuccessful trip to Holland; that the threatened exportation was only a hoax; and, finally, that in the incredibly short space of four months it had been exported, rejected in Holland, re-imported, and sold to the Gallery for the small sum of £2,200. If this is the case, the excessive *gullibility* and ingenious trickery displayed in this transaction are both so admirable in their way, that it would be difficult to award the palm.*

Now, Sir, I hope it is unnecessary for me to remind the public, that it is on *them*, and not on the silly vacillating dupe who misrepresents them, that such egregious impostures can have been practised; and if any thing could add to our indignation at official waste and official misdemeanour, it is when we see it relieved and contrasted by the successful cunning of ignorant and uneducated men. If this Velasquez was worthy of so great a

* A letter received from Holland has, since, fully confirmed the truth of the above report; I, in consequence, addressed the following note to the Editor of "The Times": — "Sir,—I beg to inform you that I have ascertained by a letter this day received from Holland, that the picture by Velasquez, which was offered for sale at the Hague, about five months ago, represented 'Philip the IVth of Spain, hunting the Wild Boar.'—the same picture, which is now in the National Gallery, and for which £2,200 were given.

"I remain, Sir, yours obediently,

"VERAX.

"*Wednesday, Jan. 20th.*"

"The Spectator" also favoured me by publishing on Saturday the 23rd of January, a note to the same effect. The confirmation of the report that this pictnre had been sent to the Hague and there rejected, arrived very opportunely, as it had come to my knowledge that attempts were being made to throw discredit on my statement.

sacrifice to keep it in the country, what must we say of that culpable indifference, which, after neglecting it for so many years, risked its loss in having allowed it to go to the Continent? If, on the other hand, it was *not* of such vast importance, how can we sufficiently condemn the managers of the National Gallery, for having suffered themselves to be bullied into buying it for £2,200 *by the threat of exportation?* Not many months since this picture was offered to a private gentleman for £1,200—little more than half the sum we have been made to pay for it; but even at *this* price it would not have been a desirable acquisition, as a better picture might have been had for the money. We must, as I have before insisted, have *model* works, if any, and not squander the public money on fashionable mediocrity.

We are thus plundered through the notorious incapacity of Mr. Eastlake, whose only guides in estimating a picture are "eminent German friends," German handbooks, German twaddle of every description, *measurement of panels*, exorbitant prices, and *threats of exportation.* I have met with some persons who are so pig-headed as to think that the " head and front" of his "offending" in the *libel* case, was in having mistaken a *name;* whereas, his offence lay in the gross ignorance manifested in his admiration and purchase of a low-class picture at a price which would have secured us a fine one. Had he bought a good, though nameless work, he might have successfully defied the revilings of all silly name-worshippers. So long as the purchases continue under the control of a "board" consisting of persons who ground their pretensions to such an office on rank and political distinction alone, and who mainly rely on an ignorant keeper, who again rests on the solid basis of Teutonic pedantry, (of which more on another occasion,) we must be constantly exposed to the rapacity of every greedy speculator, whether *disguised** or professional.

* One of this numerous section of *amateurs*, recently had the modesty to ask £2000 for an *inferior picture by an inferior master ;—only* a little more than *six hundred per cent.* on the price he had paid for it a few months previously. This self-denying individual did not " want" to sell it, but he was " open " to an offer of £2000. It is confidently asserted that Mr. Keeper Eastlake, in " *his consummate knowledge of that art of which he is so distinguished an ornament,*" was very nearly

It is well known that commissions to agents have formed no insignificant part of the prices of many of the pictures facetiously said, in the official catalogue, to have been purchased by "Parliament." I may add, as a specimen of the utter helplessness of the keeper, the explanation which he gave, to my certain knowledge, in a public auction-room, when he was reproached with the wretched selections which he made at Harman's sale in 1844. His reply on that occasion was, "We (we?) thought it very desirable to get something from that collection." Mr. Eastlake can doubtless, explain, *officially*, the peculiar charm attached to the name of "Harman." Although there is a cogency of reasoning in this reply perfectly irresistible, I confess I have sometimes thought that the "something" might have been better than the choice *souvenirs* with which he has favoured us, in the low-class "Infant Christ and St. John," by Guido, and the trumpery "Portrait of G. Dow."

With a *competent* officer at the head of the National Gallery, we should have as good, nay, a better chance of acquiring pictures at a fair price than a private collector. A gentleman wishing to dispose of a valuable work of art, would certainly, on equal terms, prefer the nation as a customer; for, besides the satisfaction of having his name connected with an important public establishment, he would retain a share in the property. Any *professed* dealer would, I am convinced, be too happy to make even a reduction in our favour, in consideration of so excellent an advertisement, (the best he could possibly desire,) were it not the general and very correct impression that a preposterous price is an indispensable bait to catch the so-called "National" purchasers. I here subjoin the unnecessary expense on each of the three pictures above quoted:—

Unnecessary excess of expenditure on the Libel on	
Holbein	£380
Ditto on "Susanna and the Elders"	410
Ditto on the Velasquez	1,000
	£1,790

swallowing the bait. The salutary doses administered by "Verax" had perhaps,begun to operate, and made him cautious. The picture in question, was to be seen a few weeks ago, in a fashionable shop not a hundred miles from Trafalgar Square.

Thus we find that the sum of £12,300 expended since Mr. Eastlake's accession to the office of keeper, might, without reckoning commissions, &c., not only have procured us both the Methuen Raphael and Titian's "Tarquin and Lucretia," in *addition* to his other acquisitions, but have left a handsome balance in our favour.

I will venture to trespass on your time and space by a few more remarks on circumstances of very recent occurrence. It cannot be too forcibly urged on your readers' attention, that, in spite of the just denunciations uttered by the press and public generally, against the Vandalisms committed in the National Gallery, Mr. Eastlake has not scrupled to declare that he had anticipated a great deal of clamour, but that he intended, notwithstanding, to *proceed* with the "cleaning." He has even condescended to inform several persons that the "Consecration of St. Nicholas," by Paul Veronese, is to be his next victim. It is, therefore, necessary that the public speedily decide, whether he is to continue in a position which will enable him to add another to the already too many fatal proofs of his mischievous incapacity. So violent has been the scouring on the mutilated pictures, that, in addition to the removal of the rich transparent glazings as so much *dirt*, the body-colour has also been injured; and the "Bacchus and Ariadne," besides having, in several parts, suffered from the most shameful erasures, has, moreover, been vitiated by some of those detestable interpolations as impudently as falsely called "restorations." The crude and filmy opacity of an ignorant "restorer" has, to Mr. Eastlake's "entire satisfaction," usurped the place of Titian's resplendent tints, and that marvellous truth of gradation so pre-eminently conspicuous in the works of this prince of colourists, has been cruelly violated by the merciless assaults of Mr. Eastlake and his "daring familiars." I have lived too many years among the finest works of Titian, not to know that this great author was incapable of committing the gross blunders in aerial perspective, now discernible in the "Bacchus and Ariadne," but which did not exist previous to the last vacation. Mr. Eastlake will doubtless, in his next pamphlet on the National Gallery, again express his "entire satisfaction" at the "result" of "such labours," and make it his boast, that that which had resisted the attacks

of more than three centuries, had been compelled, in a few hours, to succumb to the "operations" carried on under his "superintendence." Should he favour us with a second edition of the admirable pamphlet, from which I took the liberty of quoting so largely in my last letter, a few explanatory remarks on his notions of the terms "risk" and "careful preservation," as applied to pictures, would greatly extend its circulation, and considerably enhance its value as a literary curiosity.

The blighting process partially effected on the "Bacchus and Ariadne," has been consummated on the "Peace and War," formerly so glowing and harmonious, now so conspicuously the reverse that it is barely recognizable. So dreadfully has this work been handled, that notwithstanding a well-practised and tenacious memory with regard to pictures, my first impression on seeing it after the last holydays was, (and I wish it to be understood literally), that it could not be the same picture. The subversion of every law of aerial perspective is here so flagrant, that indignation is overwhelmed by astonishment at the persevering stupidity which effected it. Yet Mr. Eastlake thinks that this now repulsively discordant picture is as Rubens left it. For a further condemnation of Mr. Eastlake's "operations" on this fine work, I refer every intelligent person to the "Chateau of Rubens," and to the "Rape of the Sabines" in the same room, by the same master. Another, though less elevated Trafalgar-square official, amuses himself by telling people that "it is a notorious fact that the great masters never glazed, and, consequently, that no glazings can have been removed." Here we have at least a glimmering of reason, but it happens unfortunately that there is no truth in the statement. But what shall we say to the still more grievous drivelling of those, who maintain that no great harm has been done to the "Peace and War," as it is sure to "recover" in *time?*" Cannot these subtle logicians see that the very term implies actual disease? But I will not insult your readers' understandings by entering into a lengthy demonstration, that important results can alone proceed from the operation of great principles; that the stupendous effects visible in the works of the greatest painters, sculptors, and architects, are no exception to this

law; and, finally, that "time," so far from improving any work of human production, must inevitably injure, and at length destroy it.* Let Mr. Eastlake enjoy as much liberty of conscience as his "eminent German friends" will allow him; let him in private revel in the convenient belief that "time" will transform bad pictures into good ones, but it is absolutely necessary to prevent him from making further experiments at the expense of the civilized world. It is not sufficient that he promise "never to do so any more;" his removal would not only be an act of justice to the violated muse, but a charity to himself. "If there is any sincerity in his "entire satisfaction," (and who can doubt it?) must not his distorted vision suffer the most excruciating torture, so long as a single picture is allowed to retain its harmonious glazings? Must we be condemned to live in perpetual dread lest some sudden practical display of his outraged feelings deprive another picture of its harmony and tone?

The large Cuyp has also been injured; but the recently purchased Velasquez has been reduced to a mere wreck. So successfully have the warmth and strength been scoured out of the foreground, that the distant wood-crowned hills threaten to overwhelm the spectator, and make him fear the "wood begins to move." The background being now as prominent as any other part, the picture might be turned upside down, by way of change, as it is quite as admissible, and far easier,

* "Notwithstanding the deep-rooted notion, even amongst the majority of Painters themselves, that time is a great improver of good pictures, I will undertake to show that nothing can be more absurd. Having mentioned the whole effect of the oil, let us now see in what manner time operates on the colours themselves; in order to discover if any changes in them can give a picture more union and harmony than has been in the power of a skilful master, with all his rules of art, to do. When colours change at all, it must be somewhat in the manner following; for as they are made some of metal, some of earth, some of stone, and others of more perishable materials, time cannot operate on them otherwise than as by daily experience we find it doth, which is, that one changes darker, another lighter, one quite to a different colour, whilst another, as ultramarine, will keep its natural brightness even in the fire. Therefore how is it possible that such different materials, ever variously changing (visibly after a certain time), should accidentally coincide with the artist's intention, and bring about the greater harmony of the piece, when it is manifestly contrary to their nature?"—*Hogarth.*

to turn figures with their legs upwards, than to lug distant hills into the foreground. As it would be found a somewhat difficult task to restore Velasquez's glazings, suppose we try the effect of this picture in the position here suggested. The *bill* for all this glorious work will be a document of no small interest to posterity; the spirits alone must figure as no inconsiderable item; some idea of their strength may be gathered from the expressions of a gentleman well known in the pictorial world, who was heard to declare, more forcibly than grammatically, that the denunciations of the press against the late Vandalisms, "wasn't half so strong as the sperets as was used on the "Peace and War.'"

Some persons have expressed their surprise that an "eminent artist and Academician should so have committed himself." These belong to a very simple class, as they are unacquainted with the self-evident truth, that a knowledge of art is by no means an indispensable qualification to becoming an "eminent Academician," and that there are other and far easier means of attaining that awful dignity. So great indeed is our refinement in the fine arts, that there are Academicians who think they can afford to sneer at the works of the greatest masters. But as to that other question, whether an "eminent artist" could have destroyed the excellence which he was bound to revere, I feel that I cannot withdraw myself from the dilemma, except by either advancing a supposition detrimental to the renown of Mr. Eastlake, or by belying my former assertions: which course I am most likely to take I will leave to the sagacity of your readers. Nevertheless, the Academy has now a noble opportunity of throwing discredit on many of the charges brought against it. Some of its enemies naturally hope that it will display no interest in the matter; but I, though no admirer of such institutions, sincerely trust that it will. I scorn to wish that any body of men should commit foolish acts, or abstain from wise ones, to justify any theories I may entertain concerning them. I should wish these to be tested by what is excellent, not exalted by a comparison with what is the reverse. If the Academy has any veneration for what is truly great in art—if its schools are not intended to cover some gross

deception—it will come forward to denounce the proceedings of its infatuated member. This were a step at once honorable and politic; but as it is much easier to find voters than men of sense, should those who are entitled to this name, (which I dare almost think a more illustrious one than even that of Academician), be overruled by the majority, let them do themselves justice in the eyes of the world, by entering their individual protests against the decision of their colleagues.

Nothing but loud and reiterated condemnations of the irreverent manglings which have been committed, and the interference of Parliament ratifying the public censure, will satisfy the true and judicious friends of art; for if the public be lukewarm, there is every reason to fear that the blasting example of the National Gallery will find imitators among the less judicious of our private collectors.

Among the many specimens of intolerable cant in which the upholders of abuses try to shelter themselves, there is one which I hear is becoming very prevalent in certain quarters, namely, that "Mr. Eastlake must be supported." Now, Sir, we can all of us understand and recognise the necessity of supporting public officers; we are bound not to shackle their proceedings by calling for explanations of every step they may take in a series of complicated operations; we are bound not to prejudicate their conduct; we ought, perhaps, to consider that their very election to a public department is a presumptive argument for their capacity; but if, after being obliged to witness the palpable effects of gross blundering repeated in several branches of the same charge, we are still told to respect the sacro-sanct privileges of office, we are apt to transfer some portion of our indignation from the principal culprit, to his mean and disingenuous supporters. Support Mr. Eastlake! in what? and against whom?—in his rash ignorance against those works of the great masters, whose very essence he has so wantonly destroyed? or in his insolent arrogance against the outraged public, whose indignation moves him so little, that he has declared his resolution to persevere in spite of public opinion.

You, Sir, I am sure, and all who look boldly into the conduct even of the highest functionaries, and care nothing for their emi-

nence or the numbers of their followers, will support Truth, Genius, Knowledge, and Taste, well knowing that those who dare to tamper with their eternal foundations will be crushed in the sacrilegious attempt.

I remain, Sir,
Your obedient and obliged servant,
VERAX.

Dec. 29.

VI.

The Harrisian* Professor of Political Economy has contributed *her* mite to the elucidation of the present question. She kindly suggests to our public officers that it matters not how they throw away the public money. We are to appoint and pay them for their imagined superior intelligence and honesty, and they, in return, are to allow us to be plundered without mercy, through the stupidity of *dilettanti* "boards" and by the rapacity of conspiring knaves. Her puny mind cannot comprehend that the "greatest customer" includes, not only the "prince" and the "flunkey," but also the poor starving creature, without a home to shelter herself and children. She afterwards thus announces her discoveries on the value of master-pieces in painting;—"As a picture has no reflex action on the production of wealth," (bravo! No influence even on the improvement of manufactures?) "it is always worth precisely as much as it will bring at a given time, and neither more nor less. It has no intrinsic money value, beyond so much canvass, lead and oil."

"A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him—
And it was nothing more!"

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* "In trade, the gradations of rank mark the standard of price, from the prince to the flunkey; and the nation, being the greatest customer that any man can have, must be content to suffer some of the penalties of its pre-eminence. As a picture has no reflex action in the production of wealth, it is always worth precisely as much as it will bring at a given time, and neither more nor less. It has no intrinsic money value beyond so much canvass, lead, and oil."—Ed. Morning Herald, *Saturday, January* 2, 1837. I am sorry to say, that these are the opinions of a very numerous class. It is because I believe that many of them are well-intentioned and worth undeceiving, that I condescend to notice the contemptible trash of "The Morning Herald."

The creeds of Peter Bell and Mrs. Harris strikingly resemble each other. According to this rule, the works of Bacon, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton, are just so much ink and paper, which derive their adventitious value from the favour with which any old woman may happen to regard them. For my own part, I shall take leave to adhere to my former convictions, well assured that they are shared by the best and most enlightened thinkers amongst us:—that the productions of genius must be appraised by the beneficial effects which they exercise upon mankind; and that as "the ages of art and refinement are both the happiest and the most virtuous;" and, moreover, as "industry, knowledge, and humanity, are inseparable from those ages, and not advantageous in private life alone, but diffuse their beneficial influence on the public, and render the Government as great and flourishing as they make individuals happy and prosperous," so none but the most grovelling and disingenuous minds will ever seek to depreciate the value of those productions, which are at once the solace and the glory of mankind.

VERAX.

VII.

I shall now notice a letter which appeared in "*The Times*" of January 4th,* purporting to be a defence (!) of the doings of

* "THE SPOILT (?) PICTURES IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

"*To the Editor of The Times.*

"Sir,—Circumstances have prevented me until very recently from paying a visit to the National Gallery since it reopened after the autumn recess. I went there with no anticipations of gratification; for, deeming it improbable that the reiterated complaints of your correspondents were wholly without foundation, I expected to have found the mere wrecks of some of the pictures, from the contemplation of which I had heretofore derived the greatest pleasure.

"Judge, then, of my agreeable surprise when I find that, so far from being spoilt, the Cuyp is restored to its pristine freshness, the 'Peace and War' of Rubens, comes out with a power and brilliancy which throws the other works of that master in the Gallery comparatively into

Mr. Eastlake in the National Gallery. If such was the intention of the writer, that gentleman has indeed reason to cry out, "Save me from my friends!" Although it is foreign to my purpose to notice all the random notions which any person so totally unacquainted with the subject as "A. G." may be pleased to utter, especially as I have already refuted, by anticipation, the would-be arguments adduced in that letter, I will, nevertheless, say a few words in reply to this gentleman's wonderful appreciation of Titian. He says that the "Bacchus and Ariadne" evinces all the care of a young painter, whose reputation was hardly yet established," and draws his conclusions from that assertion. Now, let us see what Vasari, Ridolfi, Ticozzi, &c., say about this "hardly yet established reputation." Giorgione died in 1511, and as Titian was born in 1477, he must have been thirty-four years of age at that period. It is very well known, to those who know anything of the subject, that Titian had attained such excellence, and so great a reputation before the death of his mighty rival, that their works were frequently confounded, and that all historians concur in assigning the estrangement which unfortunately befel these wonderful men, to the friends of Titian having complimented Giorgione as having surpassed himself, in a work executed by the former on the outside of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, which both had been employed to adorn in 1507—four years previous to the decease of Giorgione. After this, Titian, "invited by the people of Vicenza,

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the shade, and the 'Bacchus and Ariadne' of Titian is seen for the first time, since its acquisition by the nation, in a state to justify the estimation in which it has been held as a masterpiece of colour.

"Here is assertion for assertion; but as I do not assume the privilege of dictating to the public, I will endeavour to assign a valid reason for the opinion which I have formed. It will be best illustrated by a reference to the works of Titian in the Gallery.

"A very cursory examination of the three great works which we possess of this master would satisfy the meanest tyro in art that, while in general conception and manner they show the working of the same mind, they differ from each other greatly in the details of execution. In fact, independently of their great intrinsic merit, they are valuable and interesting, as affording, in three works, examples of the practice followed by Titian at different periods of his life. The first—the 'Bacchus and Ariadne'—the history of which is well known, evinces all the care of a young painter, whose reputation was hardly yet established. It is distinguished by the purity, truth, and vivacity of its local colours, no less

painted in their Palagio della Curia, the 'Judgment of Solomon,' that it might serve as an example for the magistrates to judge wisely." He afterwards executed the famous frescoes for the Compagnia di Sant' Antonio in Padua, which are of a fine and full manner. Still later, after having finished several works Giorgione had left incomplete at the time of his death, he produced his *second* "Tobit and the Angel," for the church of San Marcelliano; "on which much admired picture he employed his most delicate manner, tempering that wonted boldness" (not much like a "young painter whose reputation was hardly yet established") "with which he long afterwards continued to paint." *Then* came our glorious "Bacchus and Ariadne," whose date is pretty accurately ascertained by the fact of its having been one of a series of pictures, painted for a cabinet in the palace of Alfonso I. of Ferrara. The first of these was allotted to G. Bellini, whose death prevented him from painting more than the figures. The following words are inscribed on a tub to the right of the spectator; "Joannes Bellinus, Venetus, p. 1514;" and with this work he closed his career. The wonderful landscape in this picture was added by Titian, who was afterwards commissioned to complete the series. It may be further observed, that Dolce, Titian's intimate friend, places the date of that stupendous "Assumption of the Virgin," in the Academy of Venice, described as painted *nel fervore degli anni suoi*, and not remarkable for timidity of execution, as far back

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than by the elaborate art which, by the aid of bold but skilfully harmonized contrast, has given that lustre of effect for which this work stands pre-eminent in the history of painting. The second—the 'Ganymede'—is a production of matured genius, worked with a full and bold pencil, and depending more for its effect on tone and arrangement of light and shade, than on the play of colour observable in Titian's earlier works. The third—the 'Venus and Adonis,'—is in the last style of the master. In general attributes it differs little from his second manner, but its colour depends more on what painters call glazings than either of the other works. Though the term is familiar to those who have any acquaintance with art, it may not be amiss to explain that glazings are transparent colours, generally combined with varnish, and applied thinly over opaque colours, to subdue or enrich and harmonize their effect.

"It is evident that the effect of dirt or accumulated and discoloured varnish must be very different on pictures in which much glazing has been employed, and on those in which tone has been acquired by the careful use of virgin tints. In both cases obscurity is the result; but in the first the accumulation has the effect of exaggerating rather than

as 1507, while none make it later than 1516. It is therefore evident, that Titian was not far short of forty years old when he produced our splendid, but much injured "Bacchus and Ariadne," and it is equally clear that he was *then* a painter of vast renown, the companion of princes, and, what is better, the intimate friend of some of the most intellectual men of that day. Vasari and Tıcozzi, moreover, agree in fixing the year 1513 for his appointment to the office of the Sensaria,* usually given, like that of the Piombo in Rome, as a reward to the most excellent painter. Of such perfection did the great Annibale Caracci esteem the "Bacchus and Ariadne," and the other pictures of the series, that in his enthusiasm he pronounced them the "finest pictures in the world;" and the high-minded Domenichino was moved even to tears when its companions were exported from Italy†. So much for "A. G.'s" kind allowances for the "Bacchus and Ariadne,"and his appreciation of its merits‡. "A. G." has also been pleased to contribute *his* mite to the history of art,—but even this modest designation of his pretensions is far, very far, above his genuine value. I would suggest a *rap*,§ (a bad half-

* Ridolfi places this event later.

† To Spain.

‡ It is of too common occurrence to hear priggish *dilettanti* make *allowances* for the great works which they cannot comprehend; whereas, had they, instead, the modesty and the *sense* to make allowances for *themselves*, they would have some chance of improvement. "The Bacchus and Ariadne," whose history is *so well known*" to A. G., "evinces all the care, &c." because Titian had the wit to know that high finish was essential to pictures intended to ornament a small room. High finish, in its best sense, that is, the attainment of the greatest result, so far from evincing *weakness*, is the greatest proof of *power*; and the "Bacchus and Ariadne", is a beautiful example of this, as being not only one of the most highly finished, but, at the same time, one of the most *powerfully executed* pictures in the Gallery.

§ Vide Walker's Dictionary.

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altering the subduing effect of the glaze; in the second, it wholly conceals the delicate and pearly colours which give freshness to the work. The effect of the removal of the accumulation is, of course, equally different. In the case of the first, the spectator is pleased to see the beauties of the picture more clearly developed, while its general effect remains the same. In the second, he sees the work in an entirely new aspect; and used, perhaps, to dirt, as the usual accompaniment of old pictures, and mistaking monotony for harmony, he is startled by the appearance of contrasts for which his eye is not prepared, and raises or joins a cry that the picture has been scrubbed to death.

penny), by way of various reading, which will present us with that combination of penury and forgery, that will at once represent the meagreness of his logic and the falsehood of his facts. But the next time he offers his bad halfpenny to the support of a congenial cause, I would advise him to remember that no one ever despised his readers, but he ended by making himself ridiculous; for what can we call it but contempt for his readers' understandings, when, in treating the question of the mutilations, he omits all mention of the proofs which I have advanced in my former letters, and speaks confidently in the face of mangled works, which, I will venture to say, nine-tenths of the inhabitants of London, uninitiated as they are, will perceive to have been most foully handled, the moment they are taught where to look, and with what to compare them. For a refutation, therefore, of "A. G.'s" ridiculous jargon, I must refer the reader to my former letters, and to the elaborate expositions of *The Spectator* on the subject, which have been repeated in *The Examiner*, and several other papers. I have only one more argument to add in this place, and that is of the presumptive kind:—Given managers and a keeper who prefer inferiority on principle, and lavish needless sums in the acquisition of all that partakes of it, while they are insensible to the merit of consummate masterpieces; and supposing such persons to have exercised their ingenuity as "cleaners" and "restorers" on works of the latter kind, to that degree, that one witness finds

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"Now, this is precisely what has occurred with the pictures of the 'Venus and Adonis' and the 'Bacchus and Ariadne.' The former was cleaned about two years ago: connoisseurs were pleased with the result, and cavillers were silent. The latter has undergone precisely the same process, and, if I am not mistaken, by the same hand; and the result is an outcry against the managers of the institution.

"It is remarkable that the foregoing remarks apply equally to two works of Rubens. The 'Judgment of Paris,' acquired last year, was cleaned before it was hung up in the Gallery. Those who had seen it in the auction gallery when it was purchased, were sensible of the judicious manner in which its beauties were brought to light before it was exhibited to the public. That picture is painted on panel with very thin colour, and depends much on glazing for its effect. The 'Peace and War,' on the other hand, is painted with solid colour on canvass, and has little if any glazing about it. Why, its fresh and delicate tones would have been totally destroyed by glazing, as they were obscured, until lately, by dirt and discoloured varnish.

it hard to recognise the "Peace and War" as the same picture, while another declares that the "Bacchus and Ariadne" is rendered visible, "for the first time, since its acquisition to the nation, in a state to justify the estimation in which it has been held as a masterpiece of colour;" and that all the world admits a very extensive change of one kind or another,—to what category, I ask, would a man of experience be inclined to refer their operations?—to that of improvement, or to that of corruption? But, alas, for induction and common sense, when the authority of "boards" is at stake! We should load the sciolist with the bitterest reproaches, who, if he found a MSS., (suppose of some inedited play of Shakspeare,) should presume to rectify it by erasures and interpolations; but those who defile the sanctuary of visible nature are to rejoice in official impunity, and all the "small change" of sham intellect and the *mites* of criticism are to defend them, As to "A. G.'s" triumphant sally upon the "Judgment of Paris," "those (?) who had seen it in the auction gallery," &c, were sensible of the judicious manner in which its beauties had been brought to light," &c.,—it was not to be expected that "A. G.," who so innocently begs people to "judge of his agreeable surprise on finding the 'Peace and War' of Rubens come out with a power and brilliancy," &c., should have discovered the smooth and monotonous tameness to which the "Judgment of Paris," * by the same master, has been re-

* It was for this very reason that I forbore to make any mention of this pictnre when I cited the "Chateau of Rubens," which I wished the public to compare with the "Peace and War," in order that they might see what it was that a practised eye missed on beholding that picture after it had been *cleaned*.

"I am far from being an advocate for overcleaning. The Gallery, unfortunately, has examples enough of that fatal practice, though its managers are not answerable for them. Witness that still noble work, the "Ecce Homo," by Correggio. But where pictures are obscured by neglect or injudicious treatment, it is necessary that the superficial encumbrance should be removed. Your correspondent "Argus" is, I suppose, keen-sighted enough to see through obstacles which baffle ordinary sight; but, humble mortal as I am, I confess that it is only on very favourable days that I can discover the silvery tones of Paul Veronose through the horny substance which covers his fine work in the Gallery; that the Salvator Rosa would to me lose nothing of its poetry if,

duced by the scrubbing process; but those who could *understand*, and knew this work, not only in the "auction gallery," but in Mr. Penrice's house in Yarmouth, are fully aware that it has since been considerably injured. The "cavillers" were not so silent as "A. G." imagines. A letter on the subject was forwarded last year to "*The Times*," but the writer, unacquainted with the rules to be observed in such cases, omitted to send his name and address,—otherwise those Vandalisms would have been exposed, and the still greater recent ones might perhaps have been prevented.

VERAX.

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it were something more palpable than mere "darkness visible;" and that I should regard some of the Claudes with more pleasure if the removal of the semi-opaque oil which the treatment of the late Sir George Beaumont has left upon their surface restored to light the fresh and aerial tones of those delightful landscapes.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

A. G.

VIII.

For two months and upwards, had the ears of the public been ringing with the denunciations uttered by the more intelligent portion of the press against the unrelenting havoc committed on several fine pictures; "*The Times*" had devoted column after column to the recital of manifold and gross abuses in the management of the National Gallery, when, at last, the "coming man" who was, by his decision, to settle the controversy for ever, vouchsafed to declare himself.* "The Author of Modern

* "*To the Editor of The Times.*

"January 7, 1847.

"Sir,—As I am sincerely desirous that a stop may be put to the dangerous process of cleaning lately begun in our National Gallery, and as I believe that what is right is most effectively when most kindly advocated, and what is true most convincingly when least passionately asserted, I was grieved to see the violent attack upon Mr. Eastlake in your columns of Friday last; yet not less surprised at the attempted defence which appeared in them yesterday. The outcry which has arisen upon this subject has been just, but it has been too loud; the injury done is

Painters" has deigned to inform us that, as regards the "Peace and War," he has "no hesitation in asserting, that for the present it is utterly, and for ever partially, destroyed." Those who are dissatisfied with this decree because they cannot understand how it is possible to destroy a picture *utterly* for the present, and only *partially* for ever, must endeavour to find a solution of the difficulty, by pondering over that other dictum, that the "mellow effect left by time is almost as precious as the glazing of the picture. It is probable that when they come to perceive a meaning in the latter, they will also find that the former is in strict accordance with all the rules of logic. Our "Author," furthermore, says that he "could not but look upon the attack made upon the pictures" (mark the plural) "as on the violation of a sanctuary," although he has, as yet, discovered only *one* injured picture, that is, the "Peace and War." He has likewise found out that "our national collection" is badly managed and wretchedly arranged, and that "the principles of selection which have been acted upon in the various purchases made within the last five or six years, have been as extraordinary as unjustifiable." Of that *libel* on Holbein, he says; "I do not speak of the spurious Holbein, for though the veriest tyro might well be ashamed of such a purchase, it (the 'spurious Holbein') would have been a judicious addition, had it (the 'spurious Holbein') been genuine." Here we have in a "genuine *spurious* Holbein," another example of that kind of juxtaposi-

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neither so great nor so wilful as has been asserted, and I fear that the respect which might have been paid to remonstrance may be refused to clamour.

"I was inclined at first to join as loudly as any in the hue and cry. Accustomed, as I have been, to look to England as the refuge of the pictorial as of all other distress, and to hope that, having no high art of her own, she would at least protect what she could not produce, and respect what she could not restore, I could not but look upon the attack which has been made on the pictures in question as on the violation of a sanctuary. I had seen in Venice the noblest works of Veronese painted over with flake white with a brush fit for tarring ships; I had seen in Florence Angelico's highest inspiration rotted and seared into fragments of old wood, burnt into blisters, or blotted into glutinous maps of mildew; I had seen in Paris Raphael restored by David and Vernet; and I returned to England in the one last trust that, though her National Gallery was an European jest, her art a shadow, and her connoisseurship

tion of ideas which the same authority calls "magnificently impossible." He was, moreover, "inclined at first to join as loudly as any in the hue and cry," but the mere "violation of a sanctuary,"—the destruction of the "Peace and War" *utterly* for the present and *partial* for ever,—the bad management and ignorant arrangement of our national collection,—the unjustifiable as extraordinary selection in the purchase of pictures generally, and the shameful acquisition of the "spurious Holbein" in particular,—have since convinced him that "the outcry which has arisen on the subject, has been too loud," and he "was grieved to see in the columns of '*The Times*,' the violent attack upon Mr. Eastlake," whom as the purchaser of the "Spurious Holbein," he himself has classed beneath "the veriest tyro;" but he is nevertheless, "not disposed lightly to impugn the judgment of Mr. Eastlake." He adds, "the large Cuyp is, I think, nearly uninjured &c." "The distance has indeed lost the appearance of sunny haze, which was its chief charm, but this" (the sunny haze, its chief charm), "I have little doubt it originally did not possess, and in process of time may recover." The sense is here very obscure, but the nonsense is so beautifully conspicuous, that the reader will be curious to learn who this "Author of Modern Painters" may be, whose decisions I am introducing to their notice. His full style and cognizance is, as follows:—"The Author of Modern Painters; their superiority (!) in the Art of landscape painting to all the ancient

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an hypocrisy, though she knew neither how to cherish nor how to choose, and lay exposed to the cheats of every vendor of old canvass, yet that such good pictures as through chance or oversight might find their way beneath that preposterous portico, and into those melancholy and miserable rooms, were at least to be vindicated thenceforward from the mercy of republican, priest, or painter, safe alike from musketry, monkery, and manipulation.

"But, whatever pain I may feel at the dissipation of this dream, I am not disposed altogether to deny the necessity of some illuminatory process with respect to pictures exposed to a London atmosphere and populace. Dust an inch thick, accumulated upon the frames in the course of the day, and darkness closing over the canvass like a curtain, attest too forcibly the influence on floor and air of the 'mutable, rank-scented, many.' It is of little use to be over anxious for the preservation of pictures which we cannot see; the only question is, whether in the present instance the process may not have been carried perilously far, and

Masters, proved (!) by examples of the True (!), the Beautiful (!), and the Intellectual (!), from the works of modern Artists, especially from those of J. M. W. Turner, Esq. R. A." Lest we should be tempted to question the authority of his work, he has given us to understand that he is a "Graduate of Oxford." What service he has rendered the cause of Art in general, we shall have occasion to see presently; the amount of his achievements in settling the present question, the reader will have already perceived to be, that with the exception of what he says about the Cuyp, which is *entirely his own*, he has rehearsed, in his peculiar fashion, (I cannot say that he has confirmed,) that portion of my grave charges against the "board" and Keeper of the National Gallery, which has been stated above.

Now, it appears to me that none but a very unfair, or a very *impudent* and self-sufficient person, after recognizing the truth of so many of my most important statements, would have lightly contradicted me in others of a grave character. A *modest* person would have argued, that a man who had discovered so much of truth, might, possibly, have detected things which *he* could not; a *clever* person would have been shrewd enough to have surmised, at least the improbability of such folly as that of asserting an untruth for the slight chance of any temporary assistance it could bring, with the certainty of its object being defeated in the end. But the "Author of Modern Painters, &c." who is neither just, nor modest, nor wise, meets me

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whether in future simpler and safer means may not be adopted to remove the coat of dust and smoke, without affecting either the glazing of the picture, or, what is almost as precious, the mellow tone left by time.

"As regards the 'Peace and War,' I have no hesitation in asserting that for the present it is utterly, and for ever partially, destroyed. I am not disposed lightly to impugn the judgment of Mr. Eastlake, but this was indisputably of all the pictures in the gallery that which least required and least could endure the process of cleaning. It was in the most advantageous condition under which a work of Rubens can be seen; mellowed by time into more perfect harmony than when it left the easel, enriched and warmed without losing any of its freshness or energy. The execution of the master is always so bold and frank as to be completely, perhaps, even most agreeably, seen under circumstances of obscurity, which would be injurious to pictures of greater refinement: and, though this was, indeed, one of his most

with a flat contradiction, and at once pronounces Verax "alike unacquainted with the previous condition of the 'Bacchus and Ariadne,' and with the character of Titian distances in general, when he complains of a loss of aerial quality, resulting in the present case, from cleaning." To the first, I beg to say, that it would give me the greatest pleasure to know any one better acquainted with the general appearance of this noble work, or with every portion of its details, than I have been for the last five years. To the second, I reply, that if the greater part of a life spent in places where I was daily surrounded by the most stupendous productions of Titian and his mighty compeers; if the most persevering investigation, during that period, of Titian's works in particular, have left me unacquainted with "Titian distances in general," the "Oxford Graduate," who was employing his time in collecting the æsthetical jargon, and the frippery of false antithesis and tawdry alliteration, which he was to palm off on his readers for criticism and fine writing, is not likely to have learnt so much of "Titian distances in general" as to justify his taxing me with ignorance. If scraping or rubbing the lights of the white drapery of the foreshortened uplifted off arm of the "Ariadne," so violently as to move even the body-colour, and so raw as to deprive it of that warmth with which Titian overspread the rest of the picture—thus leaving it more positive and white than another portion of the same white drapery on the advancing leg of the same figure, and bringing into

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highly finished and careful works (to my mind, before it suffered this recent injury, far superior to everything at Antwerp, Malines, or Cologne), this was a more weighty reason for caution than for interference. Some portions of colour have been exhibited which were formerly untraceable; but even these have lost in power what they have gained in definiteness,—the majesty and preciousness of all the tones are departed, the balance of distances lost. Time may, perhaps, restore something of the glow, but never the subordination; and the more delicate portion of flesh tints, especially the back of the female on the left, and of the boy in the centre, are destroyed for ever.

"The large Cuyp is, I think, nearly uninjured. Many portions of the foreground painting have been revealed, which were before only to be traced painfully, if at all. The distance has, indeed, lost the appearance of sunny haze, which was its chief charm, but this I have little doubt it originally did not possess, and in process of time may recover.

"The 'Bacchus and Ariadne' of Titian has escaped so scot-free

offensive nearness that which should appear more remote, thereby causing the colouring and the drawing to belie each other; —if scraping or rubbing the lights of the flying red drapery of the "Bacchus," so raw, that it now seems to advance before its proper plane, and is so painfully obtrusive that it threatens either to drag its owner out of the picture or to leave him without his cloak; —if scraping or rubbing the wreath of white jasmines which encircles the head of the inimitable young satyr, so raw, that it now advances more than the beautiful flower (which has escaped the claws of Mr. Eastlake's familiars) in the ground on the first plane of the picture, and must, consequently, either be divorced from the lovely head of which it is so appropriate an ornament, or bring that lovely head along with it away from its body;—if scraping or rubbing the lights of the white draperies of the nymph with the cymbals, so raw, that besides being robbed of their harmonious warmth, they force their lovely mistress offensively in advance of the magnificent Faun with the serpents, who, according to the *linear* perspective, is considerably nearer to the spectator;—if scraping or rubbing the upper part of the "Silenus" so raw, as to render it to that degree positive and advancing, that the jolly old man is not only made to look like a wretched dwarf, but the intention of the painter to make him lean *from* the observer, is completely frustrated;—if scraping or rubbing the uplifted arm of the Faun brandishing a calf's leg, so raw, that it now obtrudes itself in a manner that the

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that, not knowing it had been cleaned, I passed it without noticing any change. I observed only that the blue of the distance was more intense than I had previously thought it, though, four years ago, I said of that distance that it was 'difficult to imagine anything more magnificently impossible, not from its vividness, but because it is ***not faint and aerial enough*** to account for its purity of colour. There is so total a want of atmosphere in it, that but for the difference of form, it would be impossible to distinguish the mountains from the robe of Ariadne.' *

"Your correspondent is alike unacquainted with the previous condition of this picture, and with the character of Titian distances in general, when he complains of a loss of aerial quality resulting in the present case from cleaning.

"I unfortunately did not see the new Velasquez until it had undergone its discipline, but I have seldom met with an example of the

* "Modern Painters," vol. i. p. 146.

position of this figure is rendered "magnificently impossible;"—if *scrubbing* so much of the glazing off the sky, as to give it the appearance of being illumined by a different light from that which belonged to the design of the author;—if *stippling* the left pectoral and deltoid muscles of the "Bacchus" with the filthy, filmy, and opaque daubings of a contemptible "restorer;"—if all this and *more** is not infamously mutilating that great work, and *violating the laws of aerial perspective*, the "Graduate," in addition to having told us what is, may, perhaps, inform us what is *not* escaping "scot free." His voluntary confession of incapacity in first saying, "The Bacchus and Ariadne" has escaped so scot free that, not knowing it had been cleaned, I passed it without noticing any change;" and then adding immediately after; "I observed only that the blue of the distance was more intense," more "magnificently impossible," &c.; I shall leave the reader to dispose of, reminding him, lest he should be weakly merciful in his verdict, that this very person has not scrupled in his book to speak of the "glaringly false distances of Titian:"†—the contempt of the public, therefore, should be in proportion to the impudence of those who make experiments on its forbearance. The small fry, "wriggling"

* I am perfectly aware that the "Bacchus and Aradne" had suffered before, but it has undergone these additional serious injuries during the last vacation.

† For this, and every other passage not in his letter to "The Times," I refer the reader to the Graduate's book.

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master which gave me more delight, or which I believed to be in more genuine or perfect condition. I saw no traces of the retouching, which is hinted at by your correspondent 'Verax,' nor are the touches on that canvass such as to admit of very easy or untraceable interpolation of meaner handling. His complaint of loss of substance in the figures of the foreground is, I have no doubt, altogether groundless. He has seen little southern scenery if he supposes that the brilliancy and apparent nearness of the silver clouds is in the slightest degree overcharged, and shows little appreciation of Velasquez, in supposing him to have sacrificed the solemnity and might of such a distance to the inferior interest of the figures in the foreground. Had he studied the picture attentively, he might have observed that the position of the horizon suggests, and the *lateral* extent of the foreground *proves*, such a distance between the spectator and even its nearest figures as may well justify the slightness of their execution.

through their "own mud," is no inapt illustration of the pompous self-complacency with which this "Author" pilfers from his own lucubrations of "four years ago." But let it be remarked, that he is "no mere theorist, but has been devoted from his youth to the laborious study of practical Art," so laborious indeed, that he has not even had time to see that the phrase, "magnificently impossible," when reduced by the rules of common sense, means nothing more than the *preposterously absurd;* that the "impossible" is the *false;* and that the false is the *despicable*, and not "magnificent." He has indeed discovered a "mare's nest" if he has found "magnificent impossibilities" in Titian! During a tolerably long acquaintance with his works, I never did; but I have found, instead, something rather better;—magnificent possibilities; that is, stupendous truths conveyed to the senses through the most enchanting medium. Those, and those only, who with a *modest* and persevering spirit, search for these in the works of that wonderful man, will find in the end a rich reward for their labours.

The following furnishes a specimen of distortion of vision as remarkable, though not so mischievous, as that which has been displayed in Mr. Eastlake's exploits: "How many people are misled by what has been said or sung of the serenity of Italian skies, to suppose that they must be more *blue* than the skies of the North,* and that they see them so; whereas, the sky of Italy

* Some one has told the "Graduate," that the skies of the North, that is, of the extreme North, are occasionally very blue, and he has jumped to the conclusion that Italian skies must be very grey and dull. Now I beg to hint that those who have "sung" best about the "serenity of the Italian skies," have had their upper stories rather better furnished than his, and have generally made a right use of their eyes. I would, therefore, suggest to the "Graduate," that when he next honours Italy with his presence, should the sky there appear to him "far more dull and grey" than ours, he would do well to doubt the evidence of his senses, and to "suppose" it more *blue.*

"Even granting that some of the upper glazings of these figures had been removed, the tone of the whole picture is so light, gray, and glittering, and the dependence on the power of its whites so absolute, that I think the process hardly to be regretted which has left these in lustre so precious, and restored to a brilliancy which a comparison with any modern work of similar aim would render apparently supernatural the sparkling motion of its figures, and the serene snow of its sky.

is far more dull and grey in colour than the skies of the North, and is distinguishable only by its intense repose of light". To be sure! or intense light of repose, or any other way you may please to arrange the sentence. Those who have lived in Italy will be much edified by this "Graduate's" discoveries on Italian skies.

That other barbarously mutilated picture, the recently purchased Velasquez, which, since it was half rubbed out, has been not inaptly compared, to a "chalk-pit," he "unfortunately did not see until it had undergone its discipline" by the "illuminatory process;" but he was quite delighted at its genuine and perfect condition," and has "no doubt" that what "Verax" has advanced respecting the loss of the warmth and strength to the foreground, is "altogether groundless." Let me now call the readers' attention to what follows shortly after; "even granting that some of the upper glazings have been removed, the tone of the whole picture is so light, gray, and glittering, and the dependence on the power of its whites so absolute, that I think the process hardly to be regretted which has left these in lustre so precious, and restored to a brilliancy which a comparison with any modern work of similar aim would render apparently supernatural the sparkling motion (!) of its figures and the serene snow (!) of its sky." Thus, he first pronounces my complaint of injury to the figures in the foreground, "altogether groundless," and immediately after, graciously allows that some of the

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"I believe I have stated to its fullest extent all the harm which has as yet been done, yet I earnestly protest against any continuance of the treatment to which these pictures have been subjected. It is useless to allege that nothing but discoloured varnish has been withdrawn, for it is perfectly possible to alter the structure and continuity, and so destroy the aerial relations of colours, of which no part has been removed. I have seen the dark blue of a water-colour drawing made opaque and pale merely by mounting it, and, even supposing no other injury were done, every time a picture is cleaned it loses, like a restored building, part of its authority; and is thenceforward liable to dispute and suspicion, every one of its beauties open to question, while its faults are screened from accusation. It cannot be any more reasoned from with security; for, though allowance may be made for the effect of time, no one can calculate the arbitrary and accidental changes occasioned by violent cleaning. None of the varnishes should be attacked; whatever the medium used, nothing but soot and dust should be taken away, and

" upper glazings" have been removed from these figures, but that the " process is hardly to be regretted." So that £2,200 of the public money is to be squandered on an inferior work, to indulge the Keeper in futile attempts to reduce whatever merits it may possess, to a level with his own conceptions, and to satisfy the diseased fancies of his friend the " Oxford Graduate."

The principles of the Sublime and Beautiful in nature and art, are like all principles fixed in themselves, though only to be attained by severe study; and yet every whipper-snapper who has learnt a little of that barbarous terminology which passes under the name of science at Oxford, or who has flattered himself into a belief that he is a metaphysician because he spells his adjectives with capital letters, imagines that he is quite at liberty to venture into the province of artists, and to prattle about those rules of taste which it is their duty to inculcate. When, however, this interference extends to *printing* authoritative judgments upon the art and its masters, every blunder and absurdity which is committed in such a work, is aggravated into a *moral fault*, and its author is justly chargeable with all the odium which attaches to those who sacrifice important truths which they cannot understand, to personal vanity. As I believe every one to be morally responsible for dogmatizing on matters in which a principle is involved, I must notice the surmises which this " Graduate" has uttered against my competency as a judge of this question. He says " Verax" has seen little southern

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that chiefly by delicate and patient friction; and, in order to protract as long as possible the necessity even for this, all the important pictures in the gallery should at once be put under glass, and closed, not merely by hinged doors, like the Correggio, but permanently and securely. I should be glad to see this done in all rich galleries, but it is peculiarly necessary in the case of pictures exposed in London, and to a crowd freely admitted four days in the week; it would do good also by necessitating the enlargement of the rooms, and the bringing of all the pictures down to the level of the eye. Every picture that is worth buying or retaining is worth exhibiting in its proper place, and if its scale be large and its handling rough, there is the more instruction to be gained by close study of the various means adopted by the master to secure his distant effect. We can certainly spare both the ground and the funds which would enable us to exhibit pictures for which no price is thought too large, and for all purposes of study, and for most of enjoyment, pictures are useless when they are even a little above the line.

"Rembrandt and Correggio fatally, and constantly wrong in the management of chiaroscuro."

"Both the Poussins, Salvator, and our own Wilson are always wrong."

"Claude sometimes right by accident."

"The chiaroscuro of Stanfield, and that of J. D. Harding, deserving the most attentive study."

The following is, I am told, considered by his admirers, highly poetical:—

"Copley Fielding casting his whole soul into space, and exulting like a wild *duck*, (in the original it is misprinted *deer*), in the motion of the swift winds."

"David Cox (!) whose pencil never falls but in dew."

"Turner glorious in conception,—unfathomable in knowledge,—solitary in power,—with the elements waiting upon his will, and the night and morning obedient to his call, sent as a prophet by God to reveal to men the mysteries of the universe, standing like the great angel of the Apocalypse, clothed with a cloud, and with a rainbow on his head, and with the sun and stars given into his hand."

Turner is also "above all criticism, and beyond all praise,—we are not to approach his works to be pleased (Heaven forbid!) but to be taught." The following ingenuous admission of his own imbecility may also assist towards appreciating this "Graduate" at his true value: "I have said that the old masters did not give the truth of nature; if the reader chooses thence to infer that they were not masters at all, it is *his* conclusion, not *mine*." Again we read, "Turner's colour is glaring to some person's sensations and beautiful to another's. This proves nothing." Why, even a child would be able to see that it at least "proves" that one of them

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to have a Buonaroti or a Titian of our own we shall with more wisdom learn of those of whom Buonaroti and Titian learned, and at whose knees they were brought up, and whom to their day of death they ever revered and worshipped, than of those wretched pupils and partisans who sank every high function of art into a form and a faction, betrayed her trusts, darkened her traditions, overthrew her throne, and left us where we now are, stumbling among its fragments. Sir, if the canvasses of Guido, lately introduced into the gallery, had been works of the best of those pupils, which they are not—if they had been good works of even that bad master, which they are not—if they had been genuine or untouched works, even though feeble, which they are not—if, though false and retouched remnants of a feeble and fallen school, they had been endurably decent or elementarily instructive, some conceivable excuse might perhaps have been by ingenuity forged, and by impudence uttered, for their introduction into a gallery where we previously possessed two good

is *wrong*, and that either the eyes of Turner's admirers are diseased, or that the only healthy eyes in England belong to that small company. Our "Author" says it is his "admiration" for M. Angelo, Raphael, and da Vinci," which makes him look with contempt on Claude, Salvator, and Gaspar Poussin." His contempt for the latter great masters is, I willingly admit, perfectly compatble with such appreciation of the former as *his*, but since his admiration of M. Angelo, Raphael, and " da Vinci," is so injurious to whatver serves him instead of mind, the sooner he gets rid of it the better.

From what comes next we may gather some idea of his favourite recreations :—" I am exceedingly fond of standing by a bright (!) Turner in the Academy, to listen to the unintentional compliments of the mutable and rank-scented many; ' What a glaring thing!' ' I declare I can't look at it'—' Don't it hurt your eyes'? Although " the Graduate" desires to " honour the great living masters," rather than to " pour flattery into the ear of Death!" by exalting the names of those who cannot regard his " gratitude," he occasionally dares, positively *dares*, to abuse certain Royal Academicians; but terrified at his own rashness in having attacked Mr. Maclise's " ruffian figures," he " cannot refrain from beseeching him to devote his vivid imagination and vigorous powers of hand, &c., and " not to condescend, capable as he is of kindling his canvass into life, &c." And of Mr. Lee, another Royal Academician;—" It is with great pain that I

Guidos aud no Perugino (for the attribution to him of the wretched panel which now bears his name is a mere insult), no Angelico, no Fra Bartolomeo, no Albertinelli, no Ghirlandajo, no Verrocchio, no Lorenzo di Credi (what shall I more say, for the time would fail me?)—but now, Sir, what vestige of apology remains for the cumbering our walls with pictures that have no single virtue, no colour, no drawing, no character, no history, no thought! Yet two thousand guineas were, I believe, given for one of these encumbrances, and five thousand for the coarse and unnecessary Rubens, added to a room half filled with Rubens before, while a mighty and perfect work of Angelico was sold from Cardinal Fesch's collection for one thousand five hundred. I do not speak of the spurious Holbein, for though the veriest tyro might well be ashamed of such a purchase, it would have been a judicious addition had it been genuine, so was the John Bellini, so was the Van Eyck; but the mighty Venetian master who alone of all the painters of Italy, united purity of religious aim with perfection of artistical power, is

ever speak severely of the works of living masters," (particularly of Academicians who can *regard his gratitude,*) "especially when, like Mr. Lee's, they are well intentioned, simple, free from affectation or imitation, and evidently painted with a constant reference to Nature. But I believe that these qualities will always secure him the admiration which he deserves;—that there will be many unsophisticated and honest minds always ready to follow his guidance, and answer his efforts with delight."

Si Pergama dextrâ
Defendi possent, etiam hâc defensa fuissent.

Let the Academy rejoice that this spirit is not yet extinct. This is the congenial tone in which all such bodies should be approached; the badge of humility that every aspirant to the favours of Boards, Committees, and irresponsible corporations must wear:—but enough of this "Graduate" and his sayings. The public will henceforward know whether his opinions or mine are most deserving of attention.

VERAX.

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poorly represented by a single head; and I ask, in the name of the earnest students of England, that the funds set apart for her gallery may no longer be played with like pebbles in London auction-rooms. Let agents be sent to all the cities of Italy; let the noble pictures which are perishing there be rescued from the invisibility and ill-treatment which their position too commonly implies, and let us have a national collection, which, however imperfect, shall be orderly and continuous, and shall exhibit with something like relative candour and justice the claims to our reverence of those great and ancient builders whose mighty foundation has been for two centuries concealed by wood, and hay, and stubble, the distorted growing, and thin gleaning of vain men in blasted fields.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"*THE AUTHOR OF 'MODERN PAINTERS.'*"

IX.

Another attempt to throw discredit on "Verax," and his statements, is that made by Sir Martin Shee, President of the Royal Academy; and in dealing with this, I shall be compelled to notice the disreputable squabble between him and Mr. Samuel Woodburn.* Sir Martin Shee, in a letter ("*Times*," Jan. 15,) wherein he denies having used certain expressions imputed to him by "Veritas,"† on the authority of Mr. Woodburn,‡ writes as follows:—

> "I never was referred to by the late Lord Grey, by Lord Monteagle, or any other member of the Government, respecting the purchase for the nation of the Lawrence Collection of drawings. I never made any report whatever to Lord Grey on the subject of the proposed purchase. I never examined 'the Raphaels, or Michael Angelos,' as one of 'the competent judges,' who are said to have been consulted on the occasion, for the purpose of influencing the decisions of the Government, nor did I select the original drawing, or any drawing of St. Cecilia for either official comment or criticism."

The extremely cautious manner in which Sir Martin Shee denies

* Since Mr. Samuel Woodburn, in a private letter to Sir M. Shee, which he afterwards published, as an advertisement, in "The Times," of January 23, thought proper to say that he had "expostulated with an artist who is supposed to have written the letters signed 'Verax,'" I hereby inform the public that Mr. Woodburn never expostulated with *me*. In the first place, the expression implies much greater familiarity between us than exists; and secondly, among the very small number of persons from whom I would brook such a liberty, there is certainly not one of the name of "Woodburn." How Mr. Eastlake would respond to Mr. Woodburn's appeal, to bear testimony "in what proper and handsome manner" he had always spoken of Sir M. Shee, I know not; but I am well aware, that many could bear witness to his having frequently and *justly* ridiculed the President's notorious ignorance of art. Mr. Woodburn's twaddling and nauseous repetitions of his *respect* for "a gentleman holding so high a situation in the Fine Arts of this country," is of a piece with the rest.

† Several persons having confounded "Veritas" with "Verax," I shall here state that I not only do not know who wrote the letter signed "Veritas," ("Times," January 13th,) but I have not the slightest suspicion who he is. Lest this denial should be misinterpreted, I will add, that I *highly* approve of the spirit which dictated his letter.—VERAX.

‡ Mr. Woodburn still maintains that Sir Martin Shee did make use of those expressions.

having done or said this, that, or the other, *officially*, amounts to an admission that he did say something similar to what has been attributed to him; and yet Sir Martin Shee is so confident in the defence he has set up, that he generously offers to impart the shelter of it, to other objects of public accusation, in the following terms:—

> "As a trustee of the National Gallery, I, several years ago, felt it to be my duty to oppose the reiterated attempts of Mr. Woodburn, to force upon the trustees, at an extravagant price, the residue of a collection of drawings,* the most authentic and attractive portion of which had been previously withdrawn, and sold to other parties. This circumstance will, I have no doubt, satisfactorily enlighten the public as to the extraordinary and gratuitous assaults on me, and effectually illustrate, *also*, the virtuous indignation excited against Mr. Eastlake and the trustees of the Gallery, by the 'irreparable destruction' of the works entrusted to their negligent guardianship." †—TIMES, January, 15.

Now, although I have frequently heard Mr. Woodburn relate the anecdote which I have given at page 25 of this pamphlet, I should never have thought of publishing it, had not Sir Martin Shee interfered improperly in the present controversy; because it would have been both an unprovoked and an unnecessary attack upon him. It was reserved for that morbid, *no-personality* gentleman, Mr. William Coningham, to make the "extraordinary and gratuitous assault" upon Sir M. Shee, before the latter had made himself liable to any public animadversions as the supporter of official misdemeanour. But, now that instead of confining himself to a defence of his own conduct, he has voluntarily identified his cause with that of Mr. Eastlake, (and cer-

* The Oxford collection, for which Mr. Woodburn received seven thousand pounds, is part of this "residue." What, then, shall we say to the "extravagant price" of *thirteen* thousand pounds, paid by Mr. Eastlake and Sir M. Shee, for the inferior and even *bad* pictures which they have purchased for the National Gallery since 1842?

† I beg the reader to observe the ridiculous inconsistency of Sir M. Shee, who first bitterly complains of "gratuitous assaults" on himself, and then immediately makes an unprovoked attack upon me, by endeavouring to cast discredit on my accusations against Mr. Eastlake, although in the very next paragraph he says:—"Not having been able to visit the gallery since the picture-cleaner was employed there, I shall, of course, say *nothing* on the subject of his operations."

tainly there is no denying the great resemblance between them,) he cannot complain if I repel this unprovoked * invasion of my judgment and trustworthiness, by letting the world know how very unsafe it would be to rely on his testimony, in any matter wherein the works of the Great Masters were under consideration; for, that he does not appreciate them, but, on the contrary, speaks of them with a contempt which would be impertinent in any one but the President of a Royal Academy, I think that all will admit, who shall read the following declaration:—"Sir Martin Shee *loquitur:*

> "I consider the Royal Academy a much more important institution to the nation than the National Gallery; I look upon it that a garden is of more consequence than a granary, and you may heap up a *hortus-siccus* of Art without producing any of the salutary effects which never fail to result from the operations of such a school as the Royal Academy. † It would, therefore, I conceive, be an injury to the nation, as well as to the Royal Academy, if they were to be removed, in order to make room for even the best works of the old masters." ‡

In other words, Sir Martin Shee is of opinion that a school which not only teaches *nothing*, but absolutely perverts the natural tendencies of all who have the misfortune to enter it, is a much more important institution to the nation than a library stored with "*even the best works*" of the greatest Poets,

* The reader will find that I have attacked only those persons who are identified with the abuses I have exposed, and such as have attempted to invalidate the truth of my statements.

† "We all must have experienced how lazily, and consequently how ineffectually, instruction is received when forced upon the mind by others. Few have been taught to any purpose who have not been their own teachers."—Sir Joshua Reynolds.

‡ "On whom can (the student) rely, or who shall show him the path that leads to excellence? The answer is obvious. Those great masters who have travelled the same road with success are the most likely to conduct others. The works of those who have stood the test of ages have a claim to that respect and veneration to which no modern can pretend. The duration and stability of their fame is sufficient to evince that it has not been suspended upon the slender thread of fashion and caprice; but bound to the human heart by every tie of sympathetic approbation."—Sir Joshua Reynolds.

"There is no danger of studying too much the works of those great men; but how they may be studied to advantage is an enquiry of great importance."—Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Historians, and Philosophers. The impudence of this declaration is peculiarly academical; but the jumble of "garden," "granary," "*hortus-siccus*," &c., which is beyond my comprehension, I shall leave to the reader's ingenuity to explain: lest, however, he should suspend his judgment, in expectation that the President may disclaim the use of these expressions, I must inform him that they are to be found, booked to his account, in the "Minutes of Evidence, before Select Committee of Arts and Manufactures. 2041, 15 July, 1836."*

It may be necessary to state for the information of many, that the President of the Royal Academy is, *ex-officio*, a trustee of the National Gallery. The appointment of Sir Martin Shee to such an office, is another instance of the wretched manner in which this important establishment is mismanaged. He presents the anomaly of a man appointed as guardian to a great national institution, publicly avowing himself ready to sacrifice it, if necessary, to the advancement of a private society worse than useless, but with which his own personal interests and vanity are inseparably linked. This fully exposes the absurdity of appointing trustees, *ex-officio*, regardless of the qualifications necessary to the proper fulfilment of their duties.

Another instance, scarcely less astounding, though not *official*,

* In order that the reader may fully appreciate Sir M. Shee's enlightened opinions on the National Gallery, I furnish him with the following extracts from the "Minutes of Evidence," &c.

"Mr. William Ewart in the Chair.

"2039. *Chairman.*—If you consider it for the convenience of the Government, and of the Academy, that the Royal Academy might be shifted from Somerset House elsewhere, would it not be right that they should be moved from the projected situation in the National Gallery, if it were for the good of the nation?——*Sir M. Shee.*—I must observe that that seems to be begging the question. I do not conceive that such a measure could be for the good of the nation.

"2040. *Chairman.*—Might it or might it not be?——*Sir M. Shee.*—*I do not think it possible that it could be.* (!)

"2041. *Chairman.*—I will just put the case, that one half of the building was not sufficient for the national pictures, do you think the nation have or have not a right to call for the Royal Academy to give up the whole of the building for which the nation paid?——*Sir M. Shee.*—It is not for me to decide as to what are the rights of the nation; therefore I give no opinion on that subject, but I beg leave to observe that I consider the Royal Academy, &c., &c." See above.

will serve to illustrate Sir Martin Shee's great appreciation of "the brightest genius that ever adorned *my* profession." About three years ago, a gentleman for whose accuracy I can vouch, chanced to be at a house when Sir Martin Shee called to see some pictures he had been invited to inspect. The master of the house informed him that the gentleman in question had resided long in Italy, and was a great admirer of the old Italian Masters. The President did not even turn his head to the gentleman so introduced, but after staring at the pictures he had been especially invited to see, he took it into his head to talk *at* him. There was in the same room a poor Spanish picture, the sight of which drew from Sir Martin Shee the remark, that he durst say, some persons were so prejudiced in favour of old pictures as to call *that* fine drawing. The other observed, that it would be a great mistake, as that was *not* fine drawing. Sir Martin Shee, by way, I presume, of taking a very strong position, retorted by suggesting that it would be difficult to find as bad drawing in modern works as in the *Cartoons of Raphael*, at Hampton Court. Upon this the admirer of "old pictures" significantly remarked, that "it would be more difficult to find as good." These observations were made by either party, not *to*, but *at* each other, so that Sir Martin Shee will have a beautiful opportunity of publishing the double denial, that his remarks on that occasion, were neither *official*, nor made *to* any one.

What now becomes of Sir Martin Shee's "surprise and indignation when I found myself the object of various false and slanderous statements in a public newspaper—statements which represented me as treating with contemptuous ridicule the brightest genius that ever adorned my profession?" Sir Martin Shee has treated with the *most* "contemptuous ridicule the brightest genius that ever adorned" what he is pleased to call *his* "profession," in the endeavour to exalt that most worthless institution, the Royal Academy,* above a collection of "*even the best works of the*

* It is a frightful, though natural effect, of the demoralizing influence which the Academy exercises over the minds of the artists, that many of them, and *even some members of the Royal Academy*, have expressed their conviction that Mr. Eastlake has seriously injured the pictures

Old Masters," which must of necessity contain, in addition to the works of the "brightest genius &c.," those of others scarcely less great;— an establishment which should be revered as one of the brightest ornaments of the country, and as the Palladium of all that is great in Painting.

VERAX.

which have been recently "restored;" but they dare not avow it openly, *for fear of forfeiting their favour with the Academy!*

The opinions expressed by that great man, Hogarth, on the utility of Royal Academies, are as follow:—

"It will be vain to attempt to force what can never be accomplished, at least by such institutions as Royal Academies," &c.—HOGARTH.

"As to electing Presidents, Directors, Professors, &c., I consider it as a ridiculous imitation of the foolish parade of the French Academy, by the establishment of which, Lewis the Fourteenth got a large portion of fame and flattery, on very easy terms. But I could never learn that the arts were benefitted, or that members acquired any other advantages than what arose to a few leaders, &c., &c., which, as must always be the case, were engrossed by those who had most influence, without any regard to their merit."—HOGARTH.

Again, in alluding to the "ridiculous address" about to be made to the King, Lords, and Commons by the artists, for the formation of a Royal Academy, he says: "How far their mighty project will succeed, I neither know nor care; certain I am, it deserves to be laughted at, and laughed at it has been. The business rests in the breast of his Majesty; and the question now is, whether he will do what Sir James Thornhill did before him, *i. e.* establish an academy, with the little addition of a Royal name, and salaries for those professors who can make most interest, and obtain the greatest patronage."—HOGARTH.

X.

THE ABUSES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,

MY exposure of the mismanagement which has of late years gone so far to nullify the vast benefits which ought to be derived

from a National Gallery, has been supported by a statement of facts so incontrovertible and overwhelming, that any one who shall endeavour to resist the conclusions which they force upon us, is sure to be either ridiculed for the weakness of his wit, or branded as a dishonest sycophant. That the public is persuaded of the truth of the accusations contained in my letters I am firmly persuaded; that it will interest itself in the subject I confidently hope; but in order to offer to all who are disposed to co-operate in this worthy object, as complete an assistance as possible, I have here drawn up a list of the principal grievances, upon the removal of which, the friends of art and of national education should insist; and I have merely added such explanations of some amongst them, as I deemed necessary for those who have not had leisure to inquire into the subject themselves.

1. The mutilation of the national pictures in the ignorant and impudent attempt to improve them by the processes vulgarly called "cleaning" and "restoration."* During the vacation preceding the last, "the Judgment of Paris," by Rubens, purchased at the enormous sacrifice of £4200, was considerably injured; its vigour and vivacity having been reduced to smooth and monotonous insipidity by the scouring, which has had the effect of enervating those last masterly finishing touches which gave point and variety to the whole. The two Guidos, "Lot and his Daughters," and "Susanna and the Elders," which cost us, £2940, without reckoning commissions for *valuation*, were completely flayed; and drivellers may wait in vain for their "recovery." They should never have been purchased, as they are of no importance to a national collection, as works of art; but as they *were* bought, common sense tells us that they should not have been injured. But the desecration so daringly commenced, sinks into insignificance when compared with that of last

* I have received the following anecdote on the best authority, and I recommend it to the notice of the trustees and the keeper:—The late Marquis of Stafford, who presented his fellow-citizens with that noble but ill-fated picture of "Peace and War," by Rubens, was frequently advised by Mr. Prolt Dubligni, a very "experienced dealer" and picture-cleaner of that day, to have his pictures "restored," but that nobleman judiciously and constantly replied, that "it should never be done so long as he lived."

October. The "Bacchus and Ariadne" by Titian, one of the most important works in this country, and which was executed at a period when its great author was the most renowned painter of his school, has suffered grievously, both by the subversion of the laws of aerial perspective, effected by the partial erasure of its glazing, and by the contamination of filthy "restoration." The incalculably greater importance of the work considered, this is the worst case of all. The "Peace and War," by Rubens, admirable for its magnificence, and interesting in its history, has been so mauled that it is barely recognizable as the same picture, and is now as repulsive and discordant, as it was previously attractive and harmonious.

2. The insolent determination expressed by the keeper to persevere in such Vandalisms, in spite of the indignation so loudly and generally expressed; the "Consecration of St. Nicholas," by Paul Veronese, having been even mentioned by him, as the next object of his mischievous diligence.

3. The utter silence of the trustees, who ought to have put forth an official document, expressive of their resolution to prevent the keeper from carrying his menace into effect—a menace with which they have been well acquainted, at least since the appearance of my last letter to you. Until some document of this nature appear, the public cannot but infer that the recent occurrences have met with the approbation of the trustees, and they feel the more inclined to this belief, from a pamphlet published by the keeper in 1845, in which he not only expresses his "entire satisfaction at the result" of similar labours, performed during the vacation preceding the last, but he says, moreover, that they were carried on under his "daily superintendence," and by "direction of the trustees;" an assertion which has never elicited any public expression of disapproval on their part, although the injuries inflicted on the pictures alluded to in that pamphlet, were most grievous, and only surpassed by those which have been committed on much more important works during the last vacation.

4. The refusal or neglect of well-known works of that consummate excellence essential to a model, and consequently, to a national collection, although they might have been procured,

within the same period, in some instances, for less than half the price the people have been made to pay for inferior works.*

* I will take this opportunity of mentioning *another* very flagrant instance of the continued neglect of works of the highest excellence, and far more striking than any I have hitherto quoted. The work I allude to, represents a dignitary of the Church of Rome, and may be seen at Mr. Graves's, in Pall Mall, to whose care it has been intrusted by the proprietor, Sir Robert Gordon. The trustees and Mr. Keeper Eastlake are aware that Sir Robert Gordon would be willing to sell it to the nation, though not to a private person. They have had the choice, and have *preferred* works of very inferior character, and only recently, the Velasquez; but then, they were threatened with the *exportation* of that, and of course, could not *avoid* buying it. It might have been a first-rate work of art, for what Mr. Eastlake knew :—to return, however, to the picture at Mr. Graves's. Doubts are entertained as to its author; but no doubts ought to be pleaded in excuse for the neglect of a picture, except those which impugn the excellence of the work. Mr. Eastlake's *libel* on Holbein, of which even the "Author of Modern Painters" justly remarks, that the "veriest tyro might well be ashamed of such a purchase," was bought for the *name*, legibly enough written on the background, but which proved as false as the rest of the picture, and has since been officially *scraped out*. Sir Robert Gordon's picture has no *name* on its background, but greatness is legible (to those who can read it) throughout the work. There may be those among us capable of solving, even *that* awful difficulty, but if not, let it be borne in mind that the names of the authors of some of the finest specimens of Greek sculpture are unknown to us. Had this great production resembled Holbein "in manner," Mr. Keeper Eastlake's "eminent German friend" might have again assisted him, and there would no doubt have been found some "experienced dealer" to have informed him of its *value;* but it has not that advantage, and no German handbook has, it appears, as yet been discovered, which gives its *measurement*, or any other such enlightened clue to its merits. Like the recently-purchased Velasquez, it has been long neglected; but, unlike that picture, it is a *model* work. This much is certain, that those who are capable of judging, will not hesitate to pronounce it a first-rate work of one of the greatest masters of the brightest period of modern art—the latter end of the fifteenth, and first half of the sixteenth centuries. The names, therefore, of those to whom it could be rationally ascribed, must be very few. It is unquestionably of that high character which would render it a noble feature in any gallery in Europe. Mr. Eastlake's neglect of this picture is the more reprehensible, because, to my certain knowledge, he has been exceedingly anxious for the acquisition of very inferior works,—*knowing* this to have been within his reach. One of the most meddling of the trustees, was especially cautioned by a gentleman, who may be said to know something of pictures, against that low class Guido, "the Infant Christ and St. John," and he was as earnestly urged, by the same gentleman, not to neglect Titian's "Tarquin and Lucretia," while it was hanging in Mr. Christie's room, for sale;—but to no purpose. Let us see whether the present information will be attended to.

5. The inferior character of *all* the pictures purchased of late years, but more especially since 1842, and the positive *badness* of some of them.

6. The wasteful outlay of the public money in the acquisition of those inferior works; some of them having been offered to private persons, for *less than half the price* given for them by the trustees, from the public money.

7. The needless outlay of the public money in paying dealers for the valuation of pictures, while a professional man holds the office of keeper. The grounds for admitting a picture into the national collection ought to be so distinct from, and so infinitely superior to the caprices of fashion, that no one should dream for a moment of referring to dealers and their valuations, as if they were to influence his decision. For who does not perceive that it is the very idea of their occupation that, instead of being regulated by the merit of the work, they must be entirely subservient to the morbid fancies of those wealthy *dilettanti*, who think it more convenient to *buy* a taste than to acquire it by study, and afterwards dogmatise on art, not on the ground of the principles they have learnt, but of the *guineas they have disbursed?* It is of common occurrence to find pictures of the highest character utterly neglected by dealers, while others of the lowest, are as frequently valued by them at the most absurd prices. Among the numerous examples I could adduce of the influence of fashion, I will quote the following:—Within the last four years, a dealer of the most extensive experience purchased a picture for the sum of one thousand eight hundred guineas; but the same picture having been, only two years later, again offered for sale, he refused it at one thousand two hundred guineas. A contemptible little head, by Greuze, which realized one thousand guineas at the sale of Mr. Higginson's collection in 1846, (such is the refinement of the auction-room, that the "spirit" of the purchaser found its reward in a round of applause,) was, to my certain knowledge, valued previously, by several "experienced dealers," at *seven hundred guineas.* Now, Sir, it is to be most devoutly hoped that we shall have no seven hundred guinea Greuzes purchased for the National Gallery, although, under the present management, we are not altogether free from

the danger of so dreadful an infliction. On the other hand, Titian's "Tarquin and Lucretia," (besides being of great importance as a work of art, and especially interesting to this country, as having formed a noble feature in the celebrated collection of Charles I.,) hung in Mr. Christie's room for sale, during three weeks, with a reserved price upon it of only £1000; yet "experienced dealers" were so far from valuing that fine painting at this sum, that after Mr. Nieuwenhuys had purchased it, one of the *very* "experienced," boasted of having refused it at £700. It was an "experienced dealer" who valued that "Susanna and the Elders," at one thousand two hundred guineas. So much for the valuation by dealers of pictures for the National Gallery. When we have a keeper equal to the responsibilities of his office, the public money will not be squandered on fashionable mediocrity, and charges for *valuation*.

8. The defective state of the official catalogue, but particularly the very objectionable omission of the price of each picture, and of *every* expense attending its acquisition; as the people are fairly entitled to the satisfaction of knowing how their money is expended.

9. The appointment of persons as trustees, who are not deeply impressed with the importance of seizing every opportunity of acquiring *model* works for the national collection.

10. The appointment of persons as trustees, who, so far from appreciating works of the most exalted character, have obtained a ridiculous notoriety among men of sense, for giving preposterous prices for inferior pictures, when they might, at half the price, have done honour to themselves, and enriched their collections and their country, by the acquisition of first-rate productions. Such persons are objectionable, because it is neither safe nor wise to entrust the direction of our affairs to those who manage so badly for themselves.

11. But *especially* the appointment of persons as trustees, who covet a most contemptible notoriety, by affecting to despise those works, which, having for many ages received the sanction of the wisest men of all civilised nations, should be the principal objects of our care and veneration. These are objectionable in the *highest* degree, because common sense forbids us to appoint

persons to protect that which they despise. So long as *ex-officio* trustees are appointed, such anomalies *will* occasionally occur.*

12. The appointment of a person to the office of keeper, without having previously taken every precaution to ascertain his qualifications for such an important charge, but *especially* his retention in the same, after he has *repeatedly* proved himself unequal to the fulfilment of his duties.

13. The appointment of any person to a superior office in this establishment, who is not thoroughly alive to the deep responsibility attending any attempt to effect a remarkable alteration in the appearance of any of the public pictures.

14. *The undue interference of unqualified persons in the choice of pictures for the national collection;* those alone being competent for so arduous an undertaking, who have had the best opportunities of studying the principles of the greatest masters in their finest works, and who have made that study the serious occupation of their lives.

15. The great ignorance betrayed in the hanging of the pictures, whereby the people are deprived of the benefit they might otherwise derive from the study of some of the best works, which have been, in several instances, thrust out of reach in order to make room for bad fashionable pictures.

16. The long annual vacation of six consecutive weeks, whereby the people have hitherto not only been deprived, for too long a period, of that recreation and instruction, which, from the outlay of their money, they were entitled to expect without interruption; but they have been prevented still more grievously from exercising that wholesome watchfulness, which, had it remained unobstructed, would undoubtedly have rescued several noble works from the mutilations they have undergone from their *stupid* and *self-sufficient* servants.

17. The too limited number of attendants. The addition of one alone would enable all to enjoy in turn their annual holyday,

* This, though evidently a most rational objection, may to some persons appear supererogatory, as it is difficult to believe that any one answering to this description, should ever have been appointed as trustee; but, that nothing should be wanting to the total disorganization of this important establishment, even such anomalous appointments have been made.

and would do away with the necessity for closing the gallery at all. The pay of each attendant being two guineas per week, the £1,800 of the public money so wastefully squandered in the acquisition of the three pictures mentioned in my last letter, would have sufficed to keep an additional attendant *upwards of sixteen years.*

18. The insufficient extent of the present gallery for such a country as England; but, as she has hitherto failed so deplorably in the management of a small one, this is, for the present, a question of comparatively no importance.

Such, Sir, are the abuses which prevent the formation of a National Gallery worthy of the people of this great country; and, until they are removed, we shall never make any progress in the fine arts, as the public museums are the only infallible guides, by which a nation's refinement in the arts can be truly tested. Such a nation as England, we are told, should not fritter away her resources on "little wars." The truth is, she should never condescend to littleness in *any thing;* whatever she undertakes should be magnificently conceived, and liberally carried into execution, as the most dignified, the speediest, and the *cheapest* means of securing honour, renown, and *profit* to her people.*

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

VERAX.

* I believe I have furnished a tolerably complete exposure of the scandalous mismanagement of the National Gallery, and made it evident to all men of sense, who take any interest in the institutions of their country, that if we are to support such an establishment, it must henceforth be conducted on very different principles, and placed under the control of some Minister, responsible to Parliament for any abuses which may arise in its administration.

XI.

The defence of Mr. Eastlake's Vandalisms, put forth by *The Daily News*, may be considered as official; for, besides the general characteristics of official blarney discernible throughout, it contains two or three passages which directly betray the source whence they proceeded. For instance:—

> "And here let us offer a remarkable and beautiful example at once of the necessity of this cleaning, ('the Peace and War,') the skill with which it has been done, and the hardness of the vehicle in which Rubens wrought. It presents an infallible test to those who desire to judge honestly if any injury has been done to the picture—and might alone be an answer to the objectors. Let us look at the fine and perfect line formed by the jet of milk pressed from the bosom of the principal figure. Here is a beauty which was scarcely visible before the picture was cleaned. When we saw it in its freshness, after the cleaning, for a moment we fancied that it might have been restored—in the more objectionable sense of the word. On touching it with the nail, we found it as hard as a flint."—(DAILY NEWS, January 19th, 1847.)

As none but officials are allowed to touch the public pictures, it is fair to conclude that this statement was published with the approbation of the Keeper: at all events, he must have furnished the official stool upon which "we" of *The Daily News* were enabled to reach, and "touch with the nail," the "remarkable and beautiful example" which "we" recognised as the "infallible test" of skilful cleaning;—so beautiful, indeed, and fresh, that "we" thought it must have been *restored!* The Keeper's notion that the materials with which Rubens produced his pictures were "as hard as flint," betrays the spirit with which that "consummate"—*academician* operated on this ill-fated work. It has indeed been rubbed and scrubbed as though it had been of *flint.*

The meanness of the upholders of abuses is nowhere more conspicuous, than in their eagerness to seize hold of the absurd dicta of a man, whose superficiality and inconsistency have rendered him an object of ridicule and contempt to all parties. The triumphant chuckle with which Mr. William Coningham's blunders are picked to pieces, is worthy of so wretched a cause.

"The better part of valour is discretion,"—"Cerberus"* might *bite* as well as "snarl." We shall, however, presently see that even Mr. Coningham's absurdities become almost respectable when contrasted with official nonsense. Mr. Coningham says, (*Times*, Jan. 7,) "the luminous colour, the true aerial perspective, can be produced by glazing only."† Now, as the ultimate effect of a great work does not depend upon any separate part of the process necessary to attain it, he will doubtless discover, (after he has been told,) that he intended to have said, that the "luminous colour, *and* the true aerial perspective" (which to his mind appear synonymous) are *not* "produced by glazing *only*," although this is indispensable to their perfection. The processes anterior to glazing are as essential to "luminous colour" *and* "true aerial perspective," as the operation of glazing itself: —so much for Mr. Coningham's valuable communications.

Let us now see what the official oracle says. He announces that "the effect of glazings, as many of them (his 'audience') can inform Mr. Coningham, is rather to subdue that luminous colour, and approximate the aerial distances." The very fact of his talking about the necessity of subduing *luminous* colour, is a convincing proof that the official bungler mistakes "luminous" for *crude*. Now it is very easy to make colour too crude—but it is *impossible* to render it too "luminous;"—in other words, to infuse into it too much of that quality which gives it the

* "The tragedy of 'The Picture Cleaners' is rehearsed for the 'Times' after the attic model. In that the performer was double—one gentleman delivering the words, and another the action; and, in the same manner, if we be rightly informed, the reasoning of the letters in 'The Times' is supplied by one party, and their language by a second. In other words, 'Verax' is 'two single gentlemen rolled into one;' a compound whose individualities may be described—for we, too, would be classical in such a presence—as in the one case '*vox quæ faucibus hæsit*,' and in the other, '*vox et preterea nihil*.' We would suggest to the 'Times' that, under the circumstances, *Cerberus* would have been a more appropriate name; would, besides, have included the snarl among its meanings, and would have been yet more intensely classical." —Daily News, January 19.—*Two* single gentlemen like *three*-headed Cerberus!!

† After the frequent drillings this accomplished *dilettante* has had on the subject, he ought to have expressed himself a little better; but he has, it appears, yet to learn that it requires something besides buying and selling pictures, to constitute a knowledge of art.

appearance of "emitting light,"—the only true definition of "luminous," as applied to colour in a picture. This is what is understood by the intelligent student by the "light from within." There can, in no case, be an *excess* of this exquisite quality. Not even the most luminous work by Giorgione or Titian has *enough* of it, although those wonderful men carried it to far greater perfection than any other master. It cannot, therefore, belong to glazing to "*subdue*" that which is incapable of exaggeration; but it is one of its essential qualities to subdue *crudeness*, which the official oracle ignorantly confounds with the luminous quality:—so much for glazings being applied for the purpose of subduing "the luminous colour."

And now for their effect "to approximate the aerial distances." The coolness of this unqualified assertion is of a piece with the rest, and almost as false. That glazings may be made to diminish distance to a certain extent, is true; but their chief property (I have already spoken of their effects on crudeness) is to give greater breadth, vigour, saliency, vivacity, and last, though not least, *increased distance*. Glazings, on all finely coloured pictures, gradate into greater quantity as they approach the depth of shadow or of colour, which is most powerful when nearest to the spectator; and so it appears in nature. Glazings, moreover, besides bringing forward the foreground, by giving it strength and warmth, are instrumental in making distance retire, by neutralizing its crudeness. They, consequently, act with twofold power in *increasing distance*. It is precisely because the glazings have been indiscriminately scoured away from the foregrounds and backgrounds of the mutilated pictures, that the former have receded, and the latter have advanced. The removal or reduction, therefore, of the glazings, has caused the distances to "approximate," and destroyed that double effect which their presence would produce. I will exemplify this yet further, by imagining the change that such a model of colouring as the "Bacchus and Ariadne" must have undergone, and was intended to undergo, by the addition of the glazings. No qualified judge will for one moment deny that they must have had the effect of giving greater force and space, that is, *increased aerial distance*. Were it not too evident that *thought* has had no part in the recent dese-

cration, this ignorant notion of glazings being necessary only to "approximate the aerial distances," might in some measure account for what has occurred. The "restorers" imagined themselves quite at liberty to scrape the *flinty* picture without mercy, and that whatever came away from either the background or the foreground could not but improve the "aerial perspective."

It would be almost an endless task were I to refute *all* the absurdities advanced by the official "We," in three closely printed columns of *The Daily News*, but I cannot refrain from noticing the unsuspecting innocence with which they quote Rubens, *against* themselves.* All, save our National Gallery officials and their small friends, are well aware that the "yellow" or "*brown*" tone, as Rubens indiscriminately calls it, and of which he speaks, as likely to spoil the effect of a *freshly* painted picture, "*long shut up in a case without air*," is totally distinct from that golden tint necessary to represent the sunny warmth with which this great master overspread some of his finest works. So far was it from the thoughts of Rubens to denounce *this*, and so

* "On the 9th of August, 1629, being then in London, Rubens writes to Pieresc,—'If I thought that my portrait was still at Antwerp, I would direct it to be detained, and the case opened, to see whether it is not spoiled, *after having been so long shut up in the case without air*, and whether, as sometimes happens to *fresh colours*, it has not taken a yellow tone, which would cause it to lose all its original effect. The *remedy*, however, if that should have happened, is *to expose it several times to the sun*; for the sun's rays check this superfluity of oil, which causes the alteration; and if at any time it should again incline to *brown*, it would be necessary again to expose it to the sun. The sun's heat is the *only* remedy for this serious evil.'"—*Gachet. Lettres inédites de Pierre Paul Rubens, Bruxelles*, 1840, p. 237.

"In a letter, preserved by Baldinucci, in the 'Life of Subtermans,' dated Antwerp, 12th of March, 1638, Rubens commends one of his works, 'An Allegory of War,'—now in the Pitti Palace, and of which Mr. Rogers has the original sketch—to his countrymen residing in Florence. He concludes as follows:—'I fear that in a picture packed up while in a *fresh state*, the colours may undergo some alteration, particularly in the flesh; and the whites may also become a little (*qualche poco*) yellow. But one so great in our profession as you can easily remedy this, *by exposing the picture to the sun*, leaving it so exposed at intervals, and when it seems to require it. You have also my permission to put your hand to the picture, and retouch it where it may want mending, either in consequence of accident or from my oversight.' He thus invites his friend, not to varnish, but to retouch a picture which he himself was not to see again."—Daily News, January 19, 1847.

clearly does he allude *only* to that filthy, horny tinge, which defiles "fresh colours long deprived of air," that he loosely calls it, first *yellow*, and then *brown*. Had it been his intention to decry that luxurious glow, so wonderfully expressed by the great Venetian Painters, and of which he was so enthusiastic an admirer, he would have explained himself with equal distinctness. But Rubens no where recommends spirits or scrapers for the removal of even *that* offensive tinge.

Now, as Mr. Eastlake so stupidly mistook the rich sunny glazings of the "Peace and War," for that repulsive tinge * to which Rubens so strongly objects, (otherwise, what does he mean by his quotations from that master?) it appears to me that a feeling of reverence should have deterred him from applying any other remedy for their removal, than that so strictly prescribed by Rubens as the *only* cure for the *yellow* or *brown*. Had Mr. Eastlake, instead of employing "his consummate knowledge of that art, (that of flaying pictures?) of which he is so *consummate* an ornament," *only exposed the "Peace and War" to the sun*, it would most assuredly not have been robbed of its harmony and aerial perspective. The absurdity—nay, the impertinence of bringing forward the authority of Rubens, only to treat it with contempt, is so palpable, that even the meanest capacity cannot fail to be struck by it.

It is very characteristic of such a defence to quote *two* letters, in *both* of which Rubens expressly says, that the "*sun's heat is the only remedy for the serious evil*" of which he complains. Even in the letter to Subtermans he says:—"but one so great in our profession as you can remedy this, *by exposing the picture to the sun*, leaving it so exposed at intervals when it seems to require it." Not a word of spirits or scrapers. The only manual labour recommended, is that necessary to place it in the sun.

I must not allow the impudent attempt to establish a precedent for retouching important works by the Great Masters to pass unnoticed. I beg most particularly to remind the Keeper

* Not only the *whites*, but even the deepest *yellows*, which would seem incapable of more "yellowing," would acquire this *other* "yellow," or "*brown*," if long shut up, "freshly painted," *in a case without air*.

that Subtermans, to whom Rubens gave "permission" to retouch his picture, was an able painter, his contemporary and countryman, and understood the principles on which he worked;—this establishes no precedent for every jack-in-office to plaster filthy restorations on a work of Rubens. Titian's historians concur in saying that he finished several of Giorgione's pictures;—this is no precedent for Mr. Eastlake to bedaub the left pectoral and deltoid muscles of Titian's "Bacchus," which makes him look as if he were infected with leprosy. Let Mr. Eastlake and his colleagues bandy compliments by retouching each other's works, but he must not be permitted to exercise his ingenuity in "cleaning" and "restoring" the public pictures.

Those friends (!) of Mr. Eastlake, who endeavour to fix the praise or blame of the late proceedings on Mr. Seguier, offer the strongest evidence (although they have not the wit to perceive it,) of their *protégé's* incapacity, especially as he has publicly acknowledged "such labours" to have been carried on "under his daily superintendence;" for, is it not greatly lowering him beneath that position which he ought to occupy in public opinion, to make his judgment subservient to that of a mere "restorer?" * "We" of *The Daily News* say, that "Mr. Eastlake's judgment rests upon testimonials probably as sound, and certainly more notorious than Verax's." Behold, them, if you doubt, in the "*genuine* spurious Holbein," (as our unconsciously witty friend, the "Graduate," calls that sublime production.)—Behold them in the wretched Guidos, the G. Dow, &c. —but, above all, in the *flayed pictures!* "Verax" certainly cannot boast of testimonials so notorious as these, which, if not very *sound*, are at least eminently convincing.

I have a right to complain of the excessive cruelty of my antagonists, who, not content with triumphantly refuting my

* "Now—assuming for a moment that the keeper was not the cautious person he is described to be—assuming that, no matter from what cause, he could counsel the over-cleaning of pictures by the great masters—is Mr. Seguier, qualified as he is, and with a high reputation to lose (not dealing with the pictures of a country gentleman, but in the face of the whole world,) is Mr. Seguier likely to assent to such a course, and to fall in with an opinion and practice contrary to his experience and judgment? It would be absurd to suppose it," &c.—DAILY NEWS, January 18.

errors, have been hard-hearted enough to cut me in two.* The cause is now to stand on the case-paper as "*The Daily News v.* 'Verax' and another;" and, truth to say, "Verax" has certainly availed himself of the assistance, not of one, but of many; for instance, of Virgil, Milton, Hume, Wordsworth, &c., who have obligingly furnished him with quotations. If the possessors of so pure and classical a style as the writers of *The Daily News*, would vouchsafe to lend him their powerful help, he will gladly avail himself of it. At the same time, he will not trouble them for their names, as that would only be necessary if he took them, not as scribes, but as witnesses; but before he claimed their assistance in that way, he must have better proofs of the competence of their judgments, and of the honesty of their intentions. Indeed he scarcely knows how to repay the unusual compliment of multiplying him, and thereby increasing the authority of his statements. As to the multiplicity implied in the "We" of *The Daily News*, he would advise his accusers not to draw public attention too closely to *that*, lest any mischievous person should be tempted to make some perverse allusion to that lively knot of undistinguishable vermin which is the sure forerunner of *decay* in any constitution that is infected by them. *See Dr. Bateman de Morbo Pediculari.*

VERAX.

* "'Verax,' the twin-critic of the 'Times.'"—DAILY NEWS January 18.

XII.

In consequence of the overbearing tone which Sir Martin Shee thought proper to assume in the letters he published in *The Times*, January 27th, I felt it absolutely necessary to expose his repeated attempts to persuade the public that he is a great admirer of the works of the ancient masters, and that the statements which represented him as "treating them with contemptuous ridicule," were "false and slanderous." But it was not enough for Sir Martin Shee to vindicate himself;—he must attack

me a second and *third* time, denouncing me as an "associate" (in the worst sense) of Mr. Woodburn. For this, Sir Martin Shee has not the *slightest ground;* I not only consider Mr. Woodburn's conduct on the occasion quite as bad as his own, but I never thought the President of sufficient importance to even mention him in any of my letters on the "Abuses of the National Gallery." The assertion, therefore, is as *false* as it is impudent.

The following letter appeared in *The Times* of January 30.

To the Editor of The Times.

Sir,

The quarrel between Sir Martin Shee and Mr. Woodburn has assumed a very grave character—the cause of truth is compromised. As the case now stands, Mr. Woodburn lies under the very serious imputation of having invented a falsehood highly prejudicial to Sir Martin Shee's professional character, and so it will remain, until Mr. Woodburn can bring satisfactory evidence of the truth of the statements advanced by "Veritas," on his authority. Not only has Sir Martin Shee denied in the strongest language, the "slanderous statements" which "represented him as treating with contemptuous ridicule the brightest genius that ever adorned his profession," but the tone of his letters implies the most "virtuous indignation" at being considered as wanting in a proper appreciation of the great masters. I must, however, remark, that the friends of truth would have been more satisfied, had Sir Martin Shee less studiously inserted the word "official." As strong presumptive evidence that Sir Martin Shee has been "most falsely slandered," I offer the following:—

> "I (Sir Martin Shee) consider the Royal Academy a much more important establishment to the nation than the National Gallery; I look upon it that a garden is of more consequence than a granary, and you may heap up a *hortus-siccus* of Art without producing any of the salutary effects which never fail to result from the operations of such a school as the Royal Academy. It would, therefore, I conceive, be an injury to the nation, as well as to the Royal Academy, if they were to be removed, in order to make room for even the best works of the old masters."

Sir Martin Shee is, perhaps, not aware that this "*hortus siccus*" —that this "granary"—that "the best works of the old masters"

embrace, not only those of "the brightest genius that ever adorned his profession," but of others almost as great. Sir Martin Shee, in his attempt to exalt so useless an establishment as the Royal Academy above a collection of "even the best works of the old masters," *has* treated with the *most* contemptuous ridicule "the brightest genius that ever adorned his profession."* Sir Martin Shee may perhaps say, that the above were not his *official* opinions.†

I will give another instance of Sir Martin Shee's appreciation of "the brightest genius that ever adorned his profession." A gentleman who is above prevarication, affirms that about three years ago he heard Sir Martin Shee say, that "it would be difficult to find as bad drawing in modern works as in the cartoons of Raphael at Hampton Court." The gentleman in question, who is willing (if Sir Martin Shee requires it) to come forward in his own name and person, immediately remarked, that "it would be more difficult to find as good." This, however, would be but a poor excuse for any one to invent a falsehood prejudicial to Sir Martin Shee.

I appeal to your impartiality and love of truth for the insertion of this letter.

I remain, Sir, yours obediently,

VERAX.

January 27.

* And yet Sir Robert Peel advised the crown to acknowledge the *merits* of Sir Martin Shee, President of the Royal Academy, by the grant of a pension from the civil list! I am told of £300 per annum. This is another instance of shameless jobbery. Sir Martin Shee has no merits which entitle him to his country's bounty. While *he* is rewarded for *nothing*, many highly-gifted men in every profession are languishing in hopeless distress. The Royal Academy should be compelled to support their own officers. They possess an enormous sum of money in the funds, which is derived from the annual exhibitions of the works of many hundreds of artists. The Academy are very willing to render their show more attractive by the efforts of others, but they take good care to monopolize the entire control of the funds, and in addition, become beggars to the nation for the support of their chief.

† So inveterate is Sir Martin Shee's hostility to the works of the old masters, that even when, in "The Times" of January the 15th, he was striving might and main to create a contrary impression, he could not refrain from a sneer at Mr. Woodburn's "gems," or from confessing that he had "opposed" their purchase. These "gems" are that portion of the M. Angelo and Raphael drawings, which forms the Oxford Collection. So much for the "slanderous statements" of "Veritas."

XIII.

Mr. Coningham has supplied his achievements with a suitable commentary, by the publication of a pamphlet with the following title: "The Picture Cleaning in the National Gallery, with some Observations on the Royal Academy. Whittaker & Co., London." * To this he has added a "Supplement," containing the whole, save *one*, of his valuable communications to *The Times*, from December the 8th, 1846, to January the 11th, 1847. The exception is that creditable little note against "Verax's" "personalities;" an omission, which, besides doing honour to Mr. Coningham's *candour*, must have been an act of great self-denial, as the insertion of such a note, immediately after his third letter, would have rendered the "Supplement" even a greater curiosity than it is, and given it *point*, which, (be it said with all reverence,) it certainly wants. It will ever be a source of gratification to reflect that I had anticipated this excessive delicacy towards myself:—the reader will find the missing document at page 23 of this pamphlet.

I cannot, however, leave Mr. Coningham's performance without further notice, as there are many matters in it which markedly illustrate the character of the author, and the results which we may expect from his interference in a question like the present. The first page is headed, "Observations, &c.," which hieroglyphic turns out to be a compendious expression for *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*. We have first a fulsome compliment to *The Athenæum*, for the nonsense which that "four-penny-worth of Germanism,"† adopted from *The Daily News*,—a parade of technical terms, and an explanation of them which betrays at once the foppery and the ignorance of the paltriest amateur. Mr. Coningham's "important principle of the relative opacity of the high light graduating into transparent shadow," and his jargon about "luminous quality," reminds us of the transcendental "Graduate." The opposition between *subduing* colour, and making it "more luminous," is a fair indication of the

* It may be had of Mr. W. Pickering of Piccadilly.

† "The Athæneum" received this appropriate nickname from Haydon.

amount of "lead" (*Piombo*) in Mr. Coningham's own conceptions of the subject.

The next page presents us with an adroit legerdemain, by which Mr. Seguier is fobbed off on the public as responsible for the cleaning of the pictures; no doubt, that he may bear the brunt, in place of his principal. Then we have a list of the author's discoveries on the "Peace and War," the "Brazen Serpent," and Bellini's "Portrait of a Doge," and a remark in answer to that critic whose statement, according *to him*, "contrasts" so "favourably" with all the others that have appeared, namely,—that "*any petty dealer could have given him that information*," which he quotes Rubens to *prove*.

After this, he alludes to the purchase of inferior pictures, "and to the mode of hanging the Simmons bequest," without a single word by which his readers might understand that it was not his own service, but that of "Verax," to have called the public attention to these abuses; and this assumption of the merits of another is seasoned by a remark, that "persons of all classes" have "expressed the greatest indignation" to him "*in private;*" but that "few like to expose themselves to the vituperation and abuse, to which they might be subjected, by a public assertion of their opinions." This is, no doubt, intended to throw into strong relief his own peculiar boldness and constancy.

Then follows another appropriation, without acknowledgment of the observations made by "Verax"—"the shameful waste of the public money;" and a perfectly original and most ridiculous proposal that artists, while at work in the gallery, should have an opportunity of exhibiting their pictures to the public:—

> "The system of closing the gallery to the public on the last two days of the week, is quite indefensible; it must be the amateurs, not the artists, who would wish to exclude the public on those days. The professional artist would be glad of the opportunity of exhibiting his picture, while the public might be interested in watching his progress, and method of working, and thus be enabled more justly to appreciate, by comparison, the relative merits of the ancient and modern schools."

The author's design for disseminating a taste for art, by enabling the public to watch the "progress and *method*" of manu-

facturing copies in the gallery, must, from its magnitude, be *entirely his own*.

The paragraph on the Royal Academy, is a good example of the spirit in which corporate bodies ought *not* to be attacked. The hesitating critic, who thinks that "it appears very doubtful," &c.—the complaisant critic, who makes allowances for the "present state of society,"—the loyal critic, who talks of "an acknowledged head of the profession," as if the Academy was for the sake of the President, and not the President for the Academy—the *petit-maître* critic, who talks of "diplomas," and "honours," as incentives to the study of art,—*this* is not the adversary, through whose influence the Academy need fear to "risk the *loss*" of its privileges, which is Mr. Coningham's new English elegance for running the risk of losing them.*

I pass hastily by an impertinent and unprovoked attack, which this enemy to all *personalities* thinks proper to make on Mr. Jones, keeper of the Royal Academy,†—a silly outcry against the Royal Academy dinners,—a note on Bavarian fresco painting,—the conclusion that "Mr. Eastlake's character, as a

* "Wilkie was told by Sir William Beechey that unless he called on the academicians, he would risk the *loss* of his election." *See* Mr. C.'s pamphlet.

† Mr. Coningham's passion for advertising himself has induced him to write to the "Art-Union," of February 1, appealing to the editor's "sense of justice" to allow him to deny having anathematized the "glory of his country" as "a gathering of chalky absurdities." In this letter, he makes a *fourth* assault on Mr. Turner; but this time he cautiously gives him a thrust from behind a German cloak. Mr. Coningham, I am told, glories in anti-Germanism; it is, therefore, the greater condescension, on his part, to employ a German critic to denounce Mr. T.'s pictures as "the worst and most ludicrous aberrations," &c. In this epistle, we are again favoured with "Piombo," for Sebastiano del Piombo.

Notwithstanding Mr. Coningham's dutiful conduct, Pecksniff is very hard upon him in a second article on the "cleaning;" but we trust that, as he has withdrawn or denied the "intemperate phrase," the monthly dispenser of *flunkeyism* (I hope "the term here applied will not be misunderstood") will soon "have forgotten the hasty enthusiasm that gave rise to its utterance," and that an essay from Mr. Coningham's pen on "the legitimate interference of noble houses," (*vide* Mr. C.'s third letter to the "Times," Jan. 7,) will be accepted as a full atonement for past offences.

connoisseur, is not under consideration,"—the twaddle about "Mr. Eastlake's anonymous partisans," the moral assassins of society,"—together with his gratitude for Mr. Shee's "generosity,"* in allowing him to make himself ridiculous,—for I find in the "Supplement" so astounding an allegation, (which, if it be indeed true, as I must conclude that it is, by its remaining so long uncontradicted,) that I could find it in my heart to forgive all the faults and follies of his pamphlet, for the sake of the following sentence:—"I had at that time given up all idea of again writing on the subject, *having received a kind of semi-official message from Mr. Eastlake*, through a common acquaintance, stating *that the cleaning would probably not be continued.*" If this is true—for I confess that Mr. Coningham's statements have little weight with me—we have in this "semi-official message," Mr. Eastlake's condemnation of *himself*. How will he reconcile it with "begging leave to repeat his entire satisfaction at the result, (of the *cleaning*,) and to express his acknowledgments to Mr. Seguier for the care with which he executed the task undertaken by him.—*Minutes of the Trustees of the Nat. Gal.* 1847." For what purpose did Mr. Eastlake send such a message, if not as a "semi-official" *admission* that he had begun to doubt the "result" of his "operations" on the pictures? If this is "entirely satisfactory," the "operations" ought to be continued; but if, on the contrary, he had reason to suspect that the pictures had been *flayed*, instead of cleaned, it was his duty to have assured the *public*, his employers, and to promise *them*, and not every conceited, meddling *dilettante* who might be railing at him, that the *cleaning* would be discontinued. If Mr. Eastlake cannot deny having sent this "semi-official message," he will lie under a far more serious imputation

* "*Postscript.*—The generosity of Mr. Shee enables me to give his own testimony in my favour. The following passage is taken from his letter, dated the 1st February.

"'I shall ever be ready to bear my willing testimony to the gentlemanly frankness and perfect good faith with which you at once acknowledged and retracted the error of statement into which you had been unwittingly betrayed.'" Does Mr. Shee allude to the *good faith* with which Mr. Coningham publicly apologized to Sir M. Shee, and accused Mr. Woodburn of a "false assertion," *without any previous communication with the latter?—Vide* Mr. C.'s pamphlet.

than that of incapacity—that of *knowingly* defending a *bad cause*. This is the only conclusion which can, and *will* be drawn from his conduct by every sensible and impartial person.

VERAX.

XIV.

A parting word to all persons of that order of mind for which feebleness and propriety are synonymous terms, since they have been so dreadfully shocked at what they are pleased to call my "personalities," against Mr. Eastlake; while Mr. William Coningham,* alive to all delinquencies but his own, coolly protests against the violence and "personality" of my letters, the very day after his own "gratuitous assaults" on *every body*, had appeared in *The Times*. His subsequent attempt to screen

* The "Daily News," among other ill-natured remarks upon this accomplished *dilettante*, published the following:—

"We cannot help remarking it, as an unfortunate circumstance, with reference to certain of the accusations, which should have kept Mr. Coningham out of the field, or civilised his tone, for the sake of avoiding inferences, that that gentleman has himself, if our information be correct, been an unsuccessful offerer of pictures for purchase to the National Gallery. If this be not true, we give Mr. Coningham an opportunity of denying what at present we hear hinted against him as a motive."—DAILY NEWS, January 19. That any one should be deterred from doing what is right, for "the sake of avoiding inferences," is a precept worthy of the supporters of abuses. Mr. Coningham, however, had no "inferences" to dread, for he immediately published in the "Daily News" an *unqualified* denial of ever having offered a picture for purchase to the National Gallery; and he ended it by declaring that there was not "*the slightest foundation*" for the report. We must, therefore, believe him. But it was really a curious coincidence that there should have been *another* Mr. *William* Coningham, who, about that time, had an inferior picture, by Carlo Crivelli, for sale at Mr. Colnaghi's, in Pall Mall, for which he had given about three hundred pounds, a short time previously, in Italy. This *other* Mr. William Coningham did not *want* to sell this inferior picture by Carlo Crivelli; but he was "open to an offer" of *two thousand pounds*." Three hundred pounds was its full value. It is confidently asserted that Mr. Eastlake thought it would be a very desirable acquisition for the National Gallery:—hence the "slightest foundation."

Mr. Eastlake, by foisting upon the public, the "Master of the Skinner's Company," as responsible, in any way, for the mutilation of the national pictures, is far from mending the matter; Mr. Eastlake alone being the responsible person. When I have occasion to profit by Mr. Coningham's judgment, I hope I shall have the *honour* to *acknowledge* that I am indebted to *him* for it; but in this instance, I shall appeal to those on whom I have more reliance.

All who do not fear to call things by their right names will, I am convinced, acknowledge that strong terms are applicable to strong facts only. We have for this, the greatest authorities on our side, and if modern *drivellers* object to them, they are at liberty to get up a dictionary for their own private use; but they must not expect us to conform to their absurd conventions. Let any one put himself in the position of a devoted lover of what is truly great in art, witnessing, day by day, and year by year, all that barbarism in high places, unchallenged and uncontrolled, could effect for the depravation of taste and the extinction of scientific study; at last, a crowning act of Vandalism calls him forward to sustain the invidious and dangerous task of an accuser; turn where he will, he finds in every quarter the same person, not only officially responsible, but the avowed agent in every proceeding which he has to denounce. Suppose then, that he has the following history to tell: that Mr. Eastlake, during the four years that he has been keeper and professional adviser in the purchase of pictures for the National Gallery, has betrayed the utmost incapacity in the selection of ten pictures, *all* of inferior merit, and some of them *worthless*, for which he has made us pay preposterous prices;—that he has, within the same period, busied himself in attempts to acquire other poor works for the public gallery, and has only been prevented by the rapacity of disguised and professional speculators;—that he has shown himself totally insensible, on several occasions, to works of the highest excellence;—that his arrangements in the hanging of the pictures we possess, have been even worse than those of his predecessor in the same office;—that he has thrust fine works out of reach to make room for *bad* ones, while he was scribbling pamphlets "on the insufficient space

of the present building;"—and that he has frightfully and irreparably injured some of our finest pictures. Were *these* subjects to be set to some elegiac strain, or sentimental admonition? Was he to deplore, and regret, and lament, and wonder how it *could* be—or was he to *impeach?* And if so, were "ignorance," and "incapacity," terms too harsh for such proceedings? I recognize the propriety of facts being stronger than words. Are they not so in the present case? Shall we, to soothe the *smelling-bottle* school of criticism, substitute "*knowledge*" and "*ability?*" Is "insolent arrogance" an expression so *very* inapplicable to the threat, made by Mr. Eastlake, to persevere in the work of destruction, (even to naming the "Consecration of St. Nicholas," by Paul Veronese, as the next object of his mischievous diligence,) in spite of the loud and angry denunciations which assailed him on every side? Shall we substitute "*respectful firmness?*"

Lastly, there are some who, incapable of high motives themselves, in the face of the great works so cruelly mangled, attribute my letters to personal hostility, or professional jealousy. Personal hostility to Mr. Eastlake! I have, I believe, spoken to him about four times in my life, (the first *on his own unsought introduction,*) and if he particularly wishes me to relate the few words which passed between us on those occasions, I can do so, *as I remember them well.* That I *now* entertain a strong feeling of indignation against him, (not altogether unmixed with one of a different kind,) on public grounds, for his flagrant acts of omission and commission, and that I have long considered him *utterly incompetent to fill any public office,* I frankly admit. Professional jealously of Mr. Eastlake! Those who attribute my interference to such a motive, betray the baseness of their souls, and the *poverty* of their aspirations. If I feel any professional jealousy, it is of such works as those which Mr. Eastlake has so shamefully injured.

VERAX.

POSTCRIPT.

Analysis of "THE MINUTES OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY, &c."* *containing Mr. Eastlake's Report.*

DECISION OF THE TRUSTEES.

"At a meeting of the Trustees of the National Gallery, held on Monday, the 4th February, 1847: Present—The Right Hon. the Earl of Aberdeen, K. T. in the Chair; The Most Hon. the Marquess of Lansdowne, K.G.; The Right Hon. the Earl of Ripon; The Right Hon. the Earl of Ellesmere; The Right Hon. Lord Monteagle; The Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart.; The Right Hon. Sir James R. G. Graham, Bart.; Samuel Rogers, Esq.; William Wells, Esq.

"Read, and confirmed the Minutes of the last meeting.

"Read, A Report by Mr. Eastlake, Keeper of the National Gallery, made by him in pursuance of the Minute of the Trustees of the National Gallery of the 25th January last, together with various testimonials and documents referred to in the Report, (copies of which Report and documents are appended hereto).

"Resolved, That in the opinion of the Trustees, the Report so made by Mr. Eastlake is entirely satisfactory, and justifies the confidence which they have reposed in his judgment in respect to the treatment of the pictures in the National Gallery."

This decision, founded on the most contemptible and interested evidence, means nothing more than that the trustees are "entirely satisfied" with *themselves;*—a fact already so notorious, from the many unequivocal tokens they have given us of their assurance, but especially from their condnct in the "Holbein" business, that it can surprise no one to find it *printed.* It however, in the present case, furnishes the most conclusive evidence of their conceit and of their ignorance of art; and, at the same time,

* To be had of Mr. Luke Hansard, printer for the House of Commons, Great Turnstile, Holborn. Price Twopence halfpenny.

of the absolute necessity for a public and a *searching* inquiry into the whole administration of this portion of the National property, in order that means may be devised for its future protection from stupid, mischievous, and dishonest practices. The trustees themselves, after the serious charges that have been brought against their management, which are fully confirmed by their own "Minutes," will also, if they have any regard for their characters as gentlemen, court a public enquiry: otherwise, we must conclude that they *fear* it.

From "*The Minutes of the Trustees*," recently published, we find that there have been seventeen meetings since the 3rd March, 1845;—that the *average* number of trustees present at each meeting, amounts to three and a fraction—that on three occasions, *only two* were present—the chairman and another;—that on seven occasions not more than three attended;—and at one meeting alone, (the last) did they muster nine. Upon such an occasion as this, when the very existence of the pictures was to be the subject of discussion, not only ought the whole of the trustees to have been present, but each should have been obliged to give written reasons for his decision, and these should have been inserted in the "Minutes." If they are unable to specify their reasons, their decision is worthless. Sir Martin Shee's name does not occur in these "Minutes;"—he was, doubtless, too much occupied with that delightful "garden" the Royal Academy, and with his nursery of "young men, who draw better than Raphael," to trouble himself about the "*hortus-siccus*," or the "granary" on the other side of the building.

During the same period, fifteen pictures, gratuitously offered, besides others in "crayon and oil," have been refused in the most absurd and capricious manner; in some cases, without assigning any reason whatever for their rejection; while in others, their "dimensions" were considered "too large for the limited space at the disposal of the trustees, on the walls of this Gallery:"—their *measure* was unsatisfactory. On the other hand, one statue and sixteen pictures, fourteen of which belong to the Simmons bequest, have been as capriciously accepted. As it is impossible to imagine any better excuse for allowing some of

these daubs to occupy any portion of the "too limited space," we may conclude that they were of a satisfactory number of feet and inches. The *Royal* bequest and the other two donations have not yet made their appearance. If the rejected pictures were *worse* than some of those which have been accepted, or even than others acquired by *purchase*, they might have been secured as pictorial curiosities.

The "Minutes" also inform us that at a meeting held on the 7th April 1845, Sir Robert Peel proposed, that "pictures or other works of art offered as donations, in certain cases, be accepted for the purpose of being transferred to other Museums." It will be time enough to talk of "transferring" works of Art to "*other*" Museums, when we have a greater number of a high character than we know what to do with; for, surely, it would be most unadvisible to stock our Provincial Museums with works which are not of a class to promote a good taste. If the government cannot give *fine* pictures, it should give *none*, as it could not but prove highly prejudicial to Art if it lent the weight of its authority to inferior ones; and as our National Gallery is as yet only in its infancy, and the chances of the government possessing such a superabundance of fine works, are too remote to warrant it in alienating, for some time to come, any of this class from the capital, Sir Robert Peel's plan is, at best, very premature.

As this gentleman has so especially signalised himself as an apologist of the Vandalisms recently perpetrated in the National Gallery with his connivance, by his "eminent" friend Mr. Eastlake, it may not be considered out of place if I make a short digression in order to examine his peculiar qualifications as a judge in the late decision. That the Right Honourable Baronet entertains the most exalted opinion of this own *dilettanteism* no one can doubt, from the self-sufficient manner with which, after seconding Mr. Hume's motion on the National Gallery, on the 27th January last, he pronounced Mr. Eastlake's "knowledge of art" to be "consummate,"—a judgment which implied the perfect competency of the person who gave it; nor is it surprising that he should have seasoned it with a spice of that inconsistency for which he is so renowned, by complimen-

ting Mr. Hume on "the proper course he had pursued in *refraining* from comments until he was in possession of the papers." But as it must ever prove a losing speculation to take men at their own price, even when as precious as the Right Honourable Baronet himself, my readers will be better able to appreciate his taste and knowledge of art, when I inform them that he is celebrated in the "trade," as an exclusively "Dutch, Flemish, and English collector;" which means that he prefers inferiority and even *badness* on principle, and is better pleased to give preposterous sums for pictures which markedly partake of these qualities, than moderate ones for works of the highest excellence. It would, however, be the height of injustice to the Right Honourable Gentleman if we hence inferred, that he *understands* the *higher* objects of his selection, which only vanity and a superfluity of *guineas*, have induced him to procure; for in *that* case, he would appreciate, and be anxious to acquire some of those great productions, which the best of the masters whose works he *fancies* he admires, honoured as their greatest models. As a governor and *Director* of the "British Institution for promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom," he considerably increased his fame, in 1844, by encumbering nearly a whole wall of that cradle of art, by the exhibition of Lawrence's prodigious abortion of "Kemble as Rolla;" and as this specimen of "British talent" had, long before, received its due meed of public praise, and been recognised as *almost* worthy of a wild-beast show, Sir Robert Peel could have had no other motive in re-exhibiting it, than to display his *taste*, and advance the objects which that august and enlightened society so eloquently sets forth in its title, and so rigidly carries into practice.

With such powerful recommendations to our confidence in his attainments as a connoisseur, we find him judging of cartoons and frescoes, and the foremost of the dabblers in the National Gallery abuses. He was one of the seven trustees who were present at the meeting held on the 7th April, 1845, when that *libel* on "Holbein" was "brought to their view;" and as he was Prime Minister at the time, we can easily imagine what influence his favourable opinion of that vile production, (be-

smeared with fresh paint, and with the very name palpably forged on the background—though imperceptible to *them*,) must have had on the resolution, by which,

> "Mr. Eastlake is empowered by the Trustees to negociate the purchase of the picture, 'A Portrait of a Gentleman, by Holbein,' at a price not *exceeding* eight hundred guineas."

Again, at a meeting held on the 2nd February, 1846, it was "a letter from Sir Robert Peel," that "authorized the offer of *one thousand two hundred guineas*" for that other worthless picture representing, "Susanna and the Elders," by Guido: (*vide* "Minutes,") and lastly, it was the same distinguished *dilettante* who suffered himself to be *tricked* into the purchase of so inferior a picture as the Velasquez, by a crafty dealer, who had succeeded in flattering him into the belief, that the exportation of a very important work depended upon his decision. Mr. Eastlake may now enjoy the full benefit of Sir Robert Peel's certificate of his "consummate knowledge of Art."

At a meeting held on the 5th May 1845, a resolution was passed granting an exclusive privilege to the Royal Academy; the purport of which is to diminish the chances of study to the mass of artists, by admitting, "in addition to the number of general students already permitted to paint in oil colours in the gallery, twenty students of the Royal Academy." The trustees really appear to consider the National Gallery as their own private property. What right have they to grant exclusive privileges to the Royal Academy, or to any other Society? The Academy enjoy too many privileges already:—donations are constantly rejected on the plea of "too limited space," while that worthless institution is allowed to occupy one half of this national building, without any claim whatever to such a distinction; and we now find the trustees conniving at further encroachments. This constant cry of "too limited space" plainly indicates that the *room* of the Academy would be far more acceptable than their *company;* with so much wealth at their disposal, they could easily build a place for themselves, as the "Society of British Artists," without any of their advantages, has already done. Let Parliament turn the Academy out, and

we shall then have plenty of room for an efficient arrangement of the public pictures, and of many more which might hereafter be acquired either by gift or by purchase.

The "Minutes," moreover, report that since March, 1845, the trustees, guided by Mr. Eastlake's "consummate knowledge," have offered £14,477 10*s.* of the public money, for nine pictures, *all*, except the A. Caracci, (and even that is strongly tinged with decay,) of a decidedly inferior character. Of these they have contrived to secure four. Here is a list of the nine pictures together with the sums offered for them by the trustees:—

	£	*s.*
That *libel* on Holbein	630	0
"Susanna and the Elders," Guido	1260	0
"A Spanish Boar Hunt," Velasquez ..	2200	0
"The Temptation of St. Anthony," A. Caracci	787	10
The following offers made by the trustees proved ineffectual:—		
For another, "Rubens"	1800	0
For a much injured and inferior picture, *said* to be by "Luini"	800	0
For the three Lucca Caracci	7000	0
	£14,477	10

On the 3rd August, 1846, Mr. Buchanan offered two of these Caracci to the gallery for four thousand five hundred guineas. The trustees luckily refused them at this price, but their system of purchasing is strikingly illustrated by the following resolution which accompanied their refusal:—

> "Had it been in Mr. Buchanan's power to make them an offer of these pictures with the *third* picture of the Caracci, the trustees would have been inclined, in *that* case, to recommend the purchase of the *three*, at a price not exceeding £7000, the sum formerly offered for them."

So great is their zeal for stocking the gallery with inferior works, that less than three at a time will not satisfy them. I suppose they considered them "companions," as they give a

similar twaddling reason for having purchased the "Susanna and the Elders." Fortunately, however, for us, it was not in Mr. Buchanan's power to satisfy their morbid craving:—the *three* would have been a very bad bargain at the price demanded for *two* of these pictures.

They likewise deliberated more than once, upon the expediency of giving Mr. Farrer, the preposterous sum of £2000 for a low-class picture by Spagnoletto, which, considering the price, would have been a worse bargain than the *libel.* But when, on the 6th April, 1846, that marvellous picture, the "Portrait, by Raphael," (*vide* page 67,) was offered to them by Sir Robert Gordon, for £3000, they, at once, rejected a work so uncongenial to their tastes, and "resolved that they did not consider it advisable to recommend to the government the purchase of this picture at the price mentioned by Sir Robert Gordon." On the other hand, we find one of the trustees, the possessor of some of the finest paintings in England, offering to the country, for the sum of £3000, not such a work as would add to the dignity of the National Collection, (by which he would have conferred a favour,) but two pictures of an inferior character. In the present state of the National Collection, the public money should not be squandered on Jan Steen and Wouvermans; for although the works of these masters possess considerable attractions, and might, under other circumstances, be desirable at *moderate* prices, yet not even then should they be purchased, if the outlay impeded in any degree, the acquisition of *model* works. We require pictures of first-rate excellence—like that offered by Sir Robert Gordon, and by the trustees and keeper so stupidly refused.

Of course no mention is made of the various important works not offered to the Gallery, which have, to their knowledge, changed hands within the same period:—it does not appear to belong to Mr. Eastlake's "consummate knowledge of art" to *seek* fine pictures;—it extends only to *rejecting* them when offered. Neither do they condescend to inform us how *their* "Holbein" was discovered to be a forgery, and they are equally uncommunicative regarding the splendid, though fruitless offer of £100, afterwards increased to £150

by Mr. Eastlake,* to bribe the dealer to take it back. As the reader will find the whole history of the purchase of this picture at page 18, I will merely add the *names* of the eminent *dilettanti* who "empowered" the keeper "to negociate the purchase of the picture, 'A Portrait of a Gentleman,' by Holbein,† at a price not exceeding eight hundred guineas;" and who, at a subsequent meeting held on the 5th May, 1845, "Resolved, that this purchase is approved by the trustees." The following are the names of the gentlemen to whom the nation is indebted for so signal a service:—"The Most Hon. the Marquess of Lansdowne, K. G., in the chair; The Most Hon. The Marquess of Northampton, P. R. S.; The Right Hon. Lord Ashburton; The Right Hon. Lord Colborne; The Right Hon. Lord Monteagle; The Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart.; William Wells, Esq.; Samuel Rogers, Esq.;—but *principally* to Mr. Eastlake. I must here apologize to the last-named gentleman for having inadvertently stated at page 18, that the *libel* was purchased within *two* months of his prophecy, that there was "little, (he should have said *a* little,) danger of pictures being purchased for the nation which will not be fit to challenge inspection, and be worthy of being well displayed." I find by the "Minutes," that it was within *one* month.

The trustees might also have deigned to inform us by what process they were aroused to a sense of "the intrinsic merit of the Guido," ("Susanna and the Elders,") after having *refused it only a few months before*—how "the historical evidence of its genuineness, and of its peculiar value to the Gallery," burst upon their minds—and by what blandishments their *Deus ex machinâ*, Mr. Buchanan, succeeded in wheedling them into the belief, "that it would form a very

* Had the dealer accepted the offer, who ought to have borne the loss of the £150? Common honesty answers;—the trustees and the keeper. Have they then charged the nation six hundred guineas for their contemptible blunder, or only *four hundred and fifty?* If by that proposal it was their intention to make a slight sacrifice in order to lessen the loss to the public, they were equally bound to abide by it, whether the dealer accepted it or not.

† We are now informed in the Catalogue, that it is 'A Portrait, *supposed* to be a Medical Professor.' Painted by an Artist, contemporary with HOLBEIN, and resembling him in *manner*."

desirable addition to the Gallery, at the price of *one thousand two hundred guineas.*" By their own report, we find that this now *flayed* picture was in a good state previous to its acquisition;—"Mr. Seguier gave a favourable opinion of the condition of the picture by Guido." Behold it *now!* but I suppose it has not yet *recovered.* Here I must apologize for another mis-statement, for I find that that "eminent judge of the merits and *pecuniary* value of Italian pictures," Mr. Farrer, appraised this worthless production, not at *twelve* hundred guineas, as I have said at page 28, but at the more dignified sum of *fifteen* hundred guineas. Nothing is said in the "Minutes" of charges for *valuation.* For further particulars, see page 27.

At a meeting held on the 24th August 1846,

> "The trustees have under consideration a communication from Sir Robert Peel, one of their own body, informing them that the picture by Velasquez, belonging to Lord Cowley, may *now* be purchased for the nation at the price of £2,200."

The effect of this important "communication" is electric;—"they have no hesitation in recommending the purchase to the Lords of the Treasury in the strongest manner, at the price of £2,200." Did Sir Robert Peel, on this occasion, fulfil the pledge he gave in Parliament, at the time of that disgraceful *libel* job, "that the trustees would, in *future, fortify* their opinions by the advice of eminent artists and experienced dealers?" If so, we should like to know their names and their charges for *appraisement.* Or did he, with that self-sufficiency peculiar to *dilettanti,* act in this instance, solely upon his own responsibility and judgment? This, also, demands enquiry. Not a word is said of the egregious trickery of which Sir Robert Peel was made the *dupe!* Not a word that his sudden appreciation (such as it is) of the Velasquez, owed its origin to Mr. Farrer's capital joke of threatening to export it to Holland, if the Right Honourable *dilettante* did not immediately decide on purchasing it for the nation, at the price of £2,200! And, of course, the most profound silence is preserved of its *having been to Holland, and there rejected only a few days before.* The public were fairly entitled to a full recital of this pleasant history, as some compen-

sation for the preposterous sum they have been made to pay for an inferior picture; the insertion of Sir Robert Peel's "communication" would haved proved highly entertaining; he, of course, insisted on the necessity for their immediate decision, as a *dilettante* friend of his had actually *seen* the Velasquez in a packing-case, directed, "*A sa Majesté le Roi des Pays Bas.*" This, with a few more such pithy anecdotes, would have rendered the "Minutes" very attractive.

Thus we find that "*The Minutes of the Trustees of the National Gallery,*" bear the strongest evidence of Mr. Eastlake's utter incapacity, and fully confirm the accusations of ignorance and folly which I have urged against them for their neglect of *model* works,* and their shameful waste of the public money in the persevering acquisition of inferior ones. The letters which they have allowed to be published in support of the outrages committed, under their auspices, against the noble works of the great masters, are, *if possible,* more discreditable to themselves than to their stupid and *interested* authors. I may before long supply an appendix containing a few useful comments on the much vaunted "unanimity" of the trustees. The opinions that some of these *dilettanti* have been known to express of each other, would prove as startling to themselves, as they would be instructive to the public.

* When Titian's "Tarquin and Lucretia" was hanging in the auction-room, a gentleman strongly advised one of the trustees not to neglect so important a work. The only expressions of admiration which fell from this noble *dilettante*, were, "disagreeable subject,"—"I dare say it is very fine"—"frightful red breeches"—"it won't do;"—"*but*" said he, turning to a miserable little Greuze, something similar to the one in the Simmons bequest, "*what* a beautiful little thing *that* is!" A few months after, they gave for Guido's "Susanna and the Elders," nearly *double* the price for which the "Tarquin and Lucretia" was sold.

THE REPORT.

Mr. Eastlake's "Report" on the "cleaning" is, for the most part, a repetition of his defence in *The Daily News*, (*Vide* page 72,) with this difference, that while he has most carefully preserved the ignorance and stupidity of the latter, he has interspersed the former with a much greater proportion of effrontery and mean subserviency; and if anything could have added to the contempt with which every honest and enlightened friend of art must long since have viewed his official conduct, he has amply supplied the deficiency, by consenting to shelter himself behind the decision of a board of *dilettanti*, who, to the serious detriment of art, have been so long suffered to trifle with the National Gallery. For what is it but mean subserviency to recognize as competent, on so vital a question as the present, the authority of men whose judgment even *he* must know to be of no account? The homogeneous mixture of seven silly and *interested* Academicians, for we must not deprive him of his friends Messrs. Shee and Newton, who, with three uneducated and *drivelling* dealers, compose his forlorn hope, is a fitting compound for such a defence.

The "Report," which is dated the 28th of January, begins with the hacknied lament, "The absence of spacious and well-lighted rooms for conveniently carrying on the operations of cleaning the pictures on a more extensive scale;" and to give greater weight to his argument, he favours us with a quotation from the pamphlet that he addressed to Sir Robert Peel, "on the unfitness of the present building," &c., of which I have given some account at page 15, in my third letter to *The Times*. He then has the assurance to tell us that in consequence of the "operations having been unavoidably limited to a *small number at a time* the pictures which *are* cleaned, present a temporary contrast in their appearance to the mass of the collection." *Temporary* contrast! Had he said that *flayed* pictures must inevitably present a hideous and *irremediable* contrast to those which have not undergone that process, he would have accurately described the state of the *cleaned* pictures.

He next informs us, that "on attentively examining" the picture of "Peace and War," he "found it extremely difficult to say whether it might have been repaired or not at a former period;" and that he, therefore, thought it his "duty, in what appeared a difficult case," to consult Mr. Seguier; because "he had before and more than once cleaned" (he should have said *flayed*) "pictures in the National Gallery," and because on his "experience, the trustees, as a body, were accustomed to rely." The keeper winds up this admission of incapacity and subserviency to the whims of his *dilettanti* patrons and to the "experience" of the *picture-cleaner*, by expressing his satisfaction that he "took this course, a question having now arisen whether the picture referred to has been properly cleaned or not;" by which last sentence, he doubtless intends to insinuate the impression that the *picture-cleaner*, and not himself, is responsible for the irreparable injuries inflicted on that noble work. He certainly might have spared himself the superfluous labour of telling us, that he finds it "extremely difficult" to discover whether a picture has been "repaired or not at a former period," as the repainting of the background, and the forgery of the name on his *libel* on Holbein, had already afforded us distinct evidence of the amount of his sagacity in this respect. Then follow some fragments of a twaddling correspondence between this prophetic keeper and the Right Honourable Exhibitor of "Kemble as Rolla," in which we find confirmed that we are in a great measure indebted to the taste of the latter for the purchase of that *vulgar* picture, "Susanna and the Elders," said to be by Guido.

He then comes to what he calls "the operations of 1846." After giving us the "resolution" by which "he is empowered by the Trustees to use his *discretion* (!) in causing such pictures as appear to be in want of this treatment, to be cleaned and otherwise restored by competent persons," he says, that "the pictures which appeared more especially to require *attention* (!) were, the newly-purchased 'Velasquez,' 'The Allegory of Peace,' by Rubens, 'The Landscape,' by Cuyp, and the 'The Bacchus and Ariadne,' by Titian:" he, therefore, "requested *Mr. Seguier* to examine these pictures and give his opinion as to the expediency of cleaning them;" which is an

admission of his inability to decide the question himself, notwithstanding "his great eminence as an artist." After a warm eulogium on the many proofs Mr. Seguier has given of his exquisite tenderness towards pictures, he concludes this paragraph by telling us, that "the opinions expressed by him on the occasion in question had his entire concurrence:" so that we again find Mr. Eastlake, with all his "consummate knowledge," truckling to the *picture-cleaner.*

The next paragraph begins with an appearance of boldness in *him* quite startling, but as I have too implicit a reliance on his obsequiousness to suspect him of willingly offending his very good masters the trustees, and at the same time, too high an appreciation of his simplicity not to believe him perfectly capable of making unintentional admissions, I freely acquit him of any feeling of independence. He says, "those opinions, (Mr. Seguier's,) founded on minute investigation, and requiring technical experience to comprehend them, *need not be detailed here;*" by which, if it means anything, we are given to understand that the trustees have *not* that "experience" which results from "minute investigation," nor even sufficient preliminary knowledge to "comprehend" any explanations that might be offered to them in plain and intelligible terms. This language, therefore, of the keeper, implies a condemnation of the self-sufficiency with which the trustees "resolved," that he had made an "entirely satisfactory" report on a question, which, even according to him, it requires "experience, founded on minute investigation to comprehend." He adds:—

> "I wish, however, to state, that Mr. Seguier did not recommend cleaning the 'Titian' so much as the other pictures. Some of the trustees, as well as Mr. Seguier and myself, had remarked an inequality in the upper and left corner of this picture, arising from the canvass having become partially detached from its lining. Mr. Seguier stated that it was not possible to get rid of this inequality entirely, without relining the picture; but that operation I did not consider requisite. The picture was accordingly cleaned only to the extent proposed by Mr. Seguier, and the defect in the canvass was remedied as far as it could be. The latter operation was the *only one,* coming under the head of restoration, which was considered necessary in the late cleaning."

Here we have this "eminent artist" again, subservient to the

picture-cleaner—"the picture was cleaned *only* to the extent proposed by Mr. Seguier:" but the keeper, with a cunning which does him credit, evades telling us to *what* "extent." The reader, however, will find the deficiency tolerably well supplied at page 48.

He treats the flaying of the "Velasquez" and of the "Cuyp" in an equally off-hand manner:—

> "The 'Velasquez' and the 'Cuyp' were freed from the darkened varnish which obscured them. In cleaning the latter, it was hoped that two light spots in the sky, produced by restorations, which had been made before the picture was in the present building, would cease to be apparent. The result has been quite satisfactory. *The Velasquez speaks for itself.*"

With regard to the "Cuyp," he indulges in an unnecessary piece of stupidity, as no intelligent person ever expected that "spots produced by restoration in the sky" of a fine "Cuyp," "*would cease to be apparent.*" To *his* eyes, however, it appears that those filthy patches, though more palpable than before, have become *invisible!* As I cannot make up my mind to decide whether that mysterious sentence, "The Velasquez speaks for itself," was dictated by unpararalled effrontery or excessive imbecility, I refer every connoisseur to the picture itself, and leave him to draw his own conclusions.

After more *impertinence* about the Rubens having been "long buried under repeated coats of varnish," he tells us, "that the doubt he had expressed, whether this picture might have been restored at a former period, proved to be unfounded,"—a mistake scarcely credible in one so acute in detecting forgeries; (*Vide* the *libel on Holbein;*) and we are besides told, that "Mr. Seguier distinctly states, that it is extremely rare to find a large work of the age of this specimen, in so pure a state of preservation:" the mutilations, therefore, that it has undergone are solely chargeable to Mr. Eastlake.

The foregoing, which constitutes the whole of his defence, he calls "explaining what has been actually done to the four pictures above-named;" and to this he generously adds; "I beg leave to repeat my entire satisfaction at the result, and to express my acknowledgements to Mr. Seguier for the care with

which he executed the task undertaken by him." It remains to be seen how he will reconcile this implied intimation of his intention to *continue* his destructive operations, with the "semi-official message" which he sent Mr. Coningham "through a common acquaintance, that the cleaning would probably *not* be continued."

He next repeats that most impudent remark;

> "If some pictures are cleaned, while others hanging beside them are in a dirtier state, the cleaned pictures may, for a time, present a considerable contrast to the rest; which difference is more likely to be apparent, when a 'Rubens' so placed, is freed from the accumulated effects of a London atmosphere."

The latter part of this sentence, is I suppose, intended as an able vindication of the barbarous violence by which the injured pictures have been "freed" from their glazings, and robbed of their aerial perspective. He then says;

> "The change has been already witnessed in two pictures, 'The Brazen Serpent,' and 'The Judgment of Paris,' by the same master. Those works were cleaned in 1844, and at first, as was generally remarked at the time, looked comparatively crude. They have now acquired due mellowness of tone."

"The Brazen Serpent," and "The Judgment of Paris," were both much injured: their present comparatively feeble and monotonous appearance is owing to the vaunted "operations" of 1844, and the "time" that has elapsed since then, has *in no way improved them:* but if the keeper means to insinuate that these pictures were ever in the frightful condition to which he has reduced the "Peace and War," he must, *knowingly*, be endeavouring to convey a *false impression.* I will here caution the public, that the officials (as the gallery is entirely at their mercy on Sunday,) may attempt to disguise their handiwork by spreading some filthy mixture over the flayed pictures: as this would injure them still more, and deceive only the ignorant, it is a point that demands our greatest attention. Mr. Eastlake, however, would do well to reflect that all are not as blind as himself. Then follows more of this "eminent" artist's mean subserviency to the *picture-cleaner;*—

> "Lest, however, it should be supposed that glazings may have

been removed with the soiled varnish, I beg leave to say that an experienced *picture-cleaner* is not likely to be deceived in these points."

Again; "an experienced *picture-cleaner* knows, from long habit, the general nature of the materials used by the great painters."

So, the *picture-cleaner*, according to Mr. Eastlake, is to be the great authority before whom all must bow! but I trust that there is still sufficient spirit among artists, to resent, in a becoming manner, the subserviency of this *Royal* Academician. Hitherto, those who have deserved the name of painter, have been the most learned, not only in the theory, but in *every* branch of the practice of their great predecessors, as may be seen from the similarity of their results. Reynolds, for instance, whose pictures above those of all other moderns, (not even the *modern Germans* excepted,) present by far the greatest similarity both in theory and *material*, to the works of the ancient painters, is well known to have derived his success from the most persevering study of them; but history has not recorded the name of the vulgar *picture-cleaner* to whom he was indebted for his knowledge. We are, however, now told that it is the *picture-cleaner* to whom we are to look for information; in short, the *picture-cleaner* is to know more of pictures than the *painter*, and consequently of the works of the great masters than they themselves knew. No wonder pert *dilettanti* and *impudent* "restorers" continually proclaim the ignorance of our artists of the works of the great masters—that is, of *art*—when the former are represented by Eastlakes. They can, undoubtedly, quote Messrs. Uwins, Eastlake, Etty, &c., as exexamples in support of their argument; but then, the productions of these *Royal Academicians*, in no way belie my previous assertion, that *all* who have hitherto *deserved* the name of artist, have been profoundly versed in the works of the great masters; *they*, therefore, are no exception to the rule.

Whether this exaltation of the *picture-cleaner* is merely a paltry device to shirk the responsibility which attaches to himself alone, or only another proof of Mr. Eastlake's ignorance that the most profound knowledge of the *materials*, as well as of every other question connected with the works of the great masters,

is essential to any one who would *deserve* the name of painter, I neither know nor care; but I strongly feel that every artist of spirit, and every intelligent connoisseur should indignantly disclaim the brotherhood of this unworthy member, who, by thus degrading their high calling, so shamefully misrepresents them. Appointed to the honourable charge of protecting the glorious models of a lost art, he has, instead, wantonly mutilated them by destroying their harmony, and violating their perspective;—and he now apologizes by talking of vehicles and varnishes, and the infallibility of the *picture-cleaner!* Spirit of the noble Reynolds! was it for *this* that you spent so much of your life in analyzing the *materials* and investigating the *principles* of those mighty works which you so well knew how to appreciate? Was it, I say, that you might finally pay base homage to the "experience" and "long habit" of an uneducated *picture-cleaner?*

Lest the public should be misled by the great stress which Mr. Eastlake has laid, first in his defence in *The Daily News*, and now in his "Report," on what he is pleased to call the "extreme hardness which the works of Rubens often possess," whence he argues the "perfect safety" in cleaning a picture by this master, it may be necessary to inform some of them that the solvents, in *common* use with picture-cleaners, are powerful enough to remove every portion of the paint from any oil picture that was ever executed. Those persons, vulgarly called picture-*cleaners*, (picture-*destroyers* would be a more appropriate name,) who, without any knowledge of the principles of the great painters, deprive an important work of any portion of its surface, under the impression that they can do so with "perfect safety," merely because they find it yield to their violence, will infallibly injure it. But those *picture-cleaners* who do *not* destroy pictures, are guided in their operations, rather by some knowledge of light and shadow and aerial perspective, than by the more or less resistance which the surface of a picture offers to the means they employ to remove it. Mr. Eastlake's blarney about "an experienced *picture-cleaner* not being likely to be deceived on such points," is but too fully refuted by the aspect of the *cleaned* pictures.

His defence of the disgraceful hanging, whereby some of

the worst pictures, are allowed to usurp the best places, is in perfect keeping with the rest of his performances. After indulging in another quotation from his favourite pamphlet, he remarks, that "the question, which pictures should be near the eye, and which should be sacrificed, (since some must be sacrificed,) is a point on which amateurs would certainly differ." Now, if there is one point on which all *real* connoisseurs would agree, it would be in hanging the finest works in the best places, that is, in such as are most accessible to the student, by which term I mean all who take an elevated view of the Fine Arts, and not the generality of those who copy in the Gallery on private days: at all events, they would be unanimous in resolving not to sacrifice *any* portion of "the limited space" on the *line*, to such low-class pictures as Sir Robert Peel's "Susanna and the Elders," the Harman "somethings" and the Simmons trash. But the keeper is one of that intellectual party who think it a mere matter of *opinion* which *are* the best works; or whether the "Portrait of Giulia Gonzaga," by Sebastiano del Piombo, and the "Concert," by Titian, are of more consequence than the Harman "Guido" and the "Simmons" bequest. He then says, "the original arrangement of the principal pictures of the National Gallery, I need hardly observe was not under my superintendence;"—a very characteristic excuse—he found them badly arranged, and with a laudable spirit of emulation, he outdoes his predecessor by a still worse distribution of "the insufficient space." He concludes this part of his "Report" by observing; "that every good picture in the collection can be duly exhibited to view is, under existing circumstances, impossible." Now if Mr. Eastlake will but get some one (not the *picture-cleaner*) to point out to him all the bad pictures that are hung in good places, and remove them, he will be astonished at the quantity of "space at the disposal of the trustees on the walls of the Gallery."

He then requotes the two letters by Rubens, which he inserted in his defence in *The Daily News*, but as I have minutely analyzed their meaning at page 75, it is unnecessary to notice them here. I will merely observe that if the original sketch by Rubens, which Mr. Rogers possesses of the "Allegory of War,"

now in the Pitti Palace in Florence, and which is quoted in the "Report," were produced in evidence, in as fine a condition as I saw it about two months ago, it would prove the strongest condemnation of the treatment to which our "Peace and War" has been subjected.

After these, and strongly contrasting with them, follow the letters of the five *Royal* Academicians,* which Mr. Eastlake begged the trustees to "permit" him "to subjoin to this Report in his own vindication and in that of Mr. Seguier;" but as they have received from the public the contempt they deserve, and are only remarkable for imbecility strongly tinged with something worse, I shall not condescend to notice them further than by observing, that with true academical wiliness they try their utmost to make the *picture-cleaner* their comrade's scapegoat; and that it is grievous to reflect that the silly person who signs himself "Thomas Uwins," (evidently A. G. of *The*

* Mr. Edwin Landseer would have done well, had he taken his father's opinion of the "Peace and War," instead of writing his silly letter to "*Dear* Eastlake." Mr. John Landseer, in his Catalogue of the Nat. Gal. said of this picture in 1834, "The general and gratifying light, and warm colour, which catches on these sub-deities, and which Rubens so well knew how to spread, falls broadly on the figure of Benevolence, or Public Felicity; and is conducted onward, with great address, to its other principal objects—namely, the youthful group, where it emphatically rekindles, with great advantage to the general effect. As a picture, and independently of the philanthropic trains of ideas with which it is associated, the whole *is magnificently rich.*" Here are *rich harmonies of splendid colour*," &c. Again; "a broad and brilliant light falls on the personification of *Public Felicity*—a poetic creation of Rubens' own, where he has lavished *his* best taste of female form, and his *clear*, and *pulpy*, and *juicy*, and palpitating *flesh tints*, and *blessed as with a beautiful apparition!* The present figure is *eminently beautiful*," &c. Mr. John Landseer's eyes are evidently of use to him; but, Mr. *Edwin* Landseer, his son, in 1847, writes to Mr. Eastlake; "I should like you to say to Mr. Seguier from me how much obliged to *him* I feel for his judicious cleaning; which *enables me to see the merits of the masters*," &c. Mr. Etty says; "I confess I could never like the Rubens *because I could not see it*," &c. "its *darkness, opacity*, and heavy character, until it was *thus* cleaned," &c. "for the *first time* in my life I liked this picture, which I can *now* see and admire," &c. Mr. Uwins says; "I have known the picture many years, but never knew its value till *now*. It *always* appeared to be covered with a solid mass of *dirt, filth*, and *patches*, from which I have turned away in disappointment and *disgust*. *Judge then of the zest* with which I have enjoyed this beautiful work in its *present intelligible state.*"—*Vide* "Minutes."

Times,) and who says in his letter, that "nothing can exceed the beauty which the Cuyp and the Velasquez present as the effect of the *picture-cleaner's* skill," is "curator (!) of the pictures in her Majesty's possession."

Lastly, follow the certificates from Mr. Eastlake's "other persons who have *great knowledge* of the works of the ancient masters;"—three uneducated dealers, notoriously the most drivelling of their class. His attempts to secure the assistance of any of the intelligent dealers, have to their credit, signally failed; and his mean acceptance of three such names as those which he has tacked to his "Report," has only served to render his position the more ridiculous and disgraceful. It was my intention to have treated with merited contempt the evidence of such ignorant men; but as it would be unfair, on the one hand, to deprive Mr. Eastlake of any part of the benefit of such valuable co-operation, and on the other, to prevent the dealer, who signs himself "Peter Norton," from the full enjoyment of the distinction to which he has been raised, the public will be better able to appreciate his candour and intelligence when I inform them, that Mr. Morris Moore twice chanced to meet this very person in December last—that on each occasion he said that the Velasquez had been terribly used, and that he could now only compare it to a "chalk-pit;" but that he did not think the "Peace and War" so much injured, for although "frightful" to look at at present, he believed it "would recover in time."

> "Notwithstanding the deep-rooted notion, even amongst the majority of painters themselves, that time is a great improver of good pictures, nothing can be more absurd."—HOGARTH.

> "Time cannot give a picture more union and harmony than has been in the power of a skilful master, with all his rules of art to do."
> —HOGARTH.

At page 34, I have inserted the incontrovertible arguments by which this great man supports his assertions; and as he has shewn in his works, that he knew what he was talking about, I would advise the reader to take *his* opinion in preference to that of such brainless individuals as the friends Messrs. Norton and Eastlake. If we believe, as we ought, that such great

colourists as Titian and Rubens gave to their pictures both "union and harmony," we may rest assured that any process which deprives them of these qualities, deserves no better name than "*flaying;*" and that neither "time" nor *twaddle* will ever improve them.

Mr. Eastlake winds up his model "Report" by saying:—

> "These documents, with the statements and opinions before submitted, will, perhaps (!), afford *sufficient* information on the subject to which the attention of the trustees has been called, and on which I was directed to furnish a Report."

Much more might be said against this disreputable document, and of Mr. Eastlake's repeated admissions of his own incapacity, but I have already noticed it far more than it deserves, and said quite enough to convince the most sceptical, if honestly disposed, that Mr. Eastlake has neither the ability nor the spirit requisite in a public officer; and that his appointment to the offices of Keeper of the National Gallery, and of Secretary to the Commission of Fine Arts, can have had no better foundation than the patronage of a few influential men, whose ignorance of art and whose vanity have enabled him to make his evasiveness and superficiality pass for profundity, and his obsequiousness for amiability. But lest the reader should require further proof of his incompetency, I will subjoin a few extracts from "*The Minutes of Evidence, taken before the Select Committee of Art Unions, January* 22, 1844."

"THOMAS WYSE, ESQ. *in the Chair.*

> "4484. *Mr. Ewart.*—Do you approve of the system which has lately been adopted of issuing outlines, after the manner of Retsch, to each subscriber?—*Mr. Eastlake.*—*Yes,* I should mention that as one of the many proofs of the desire on the part of the committee to do their *utmost* to promote the *higher class of art.*"

We here find this "eminent artist" giving it as his deliberate opinion, that "outlines after the manner of Retsch," than which nothing can be more corrupt in style, or contemptible in design, should be the models for promoting "*the higher class of art;*" and as if sound taste was not expiring fast enough, from other atal causes, he stimulates that most pernicious society, the Art-

Union *Lottery*, to new exertions in order to accelerate its final extinction.

"4495. *Chairman.*—Would you recommend that the subjects to be selected for engraving should be taken from the works of ancient or living artists?—*Mr. Eastlake.*—I should say from the *living artists.*"

"With respect to the pictures you would choose as your models I would have you choose those of established reputation, rather than follow your own fancy. If you should not admire them at first, you will, by endeavouring to imitate them, find that the world has not been deceived. The works of those who have stood the test of ages, have a claim to that respect and veneration to which *no modern* can pretend." *

"4496. *Mr. M'Geachy.*—Upon what principle?—*Mr. Eastlake.*—It would be possible to select works *fine enough to promote public taste;* and it is always an honour to an artist to have his works engraved, if they are well engraved.

Upon what principle indeed!—The latter part of Mr. Eastlake's rigmarole I do not pretend to understand, but I know full well, that he who thinks that it would be possible to select from among the productions of the artists of the present day, "works fine enough to promote public taste," is *not* the man to direct us in any attempt to raise art from the degraded state into which it has fallen. In the words of Reynolds, "our only hope of its revival will consist in our being thoroughly sensible of its depravation and decay."—"The modern who recommends himself as a standard may justly be considered as ignorant of the true end, and unacquainted with the proper object of the art which he professes. To follow such a guide, will not only retard the student, but mislead him."†

"4497. *Mr. Ewart.*—You have spoken with approbation of the system of outline engraving; would you recommend that such a proportion of the funds of the Art Union should be devoted to that purpose, as to enable them to have the first drawings of the great masters engraved; such as in the collection at Oxford; Sir Thomas Lawrence's first outlines and drawings?—*Mr. Eastlake.*—*No,* I would *not* recommend that, because it requires a very cultivated taste to relish such things; *they would not be quite the class of works to put into the hands of uncultivated amateurs.*"

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* Sir Joshua Reynolds.

† Sir Joshua Reynolds.

No!—We might have been somewhat puzzled to comprehend how Raphael and M. Angelo drawings could be "relished" without being *seen* and long studied, were it not for the very lucid manner in which Mr. Eastlake has above expressed his warm approbation of "the system of issuing outlines after the manner of Retsch," for promoting "the higher class of art;" but he has hereby removed that difficulty, and we may now rest assured that after "uncultivated amateurs" have been well grounded in, "the works of living artists," and have acquired "a very cultivated taste," by the contemplation of outlines "after the manner of Retsch," *alias* wretched outlines, they will be in a fit condition to have M. Angelo and Raphael drawings put into their hands, because they will *then* be able "to relish such things"—*at sight*. "We are, *on no account*, to expect that fine things should descend to us—our taste, if possible, must be made to *ascend to them*. We must even feign a relish, till we find a relish come; and feel, that what began in fiction, terminates in reality."* "Our minds should be long habituated to the contemplation of excellence; and, far from being contented to make such habits the discipline of our *youth* only, we should, to the last moment of our lives, continue a settled intercourse with all the true examples of grandeur. Their inventions are not only the food of our *infancy*, but the substance which supplies the fullest maturity of our vigour. Study, therefore, the great works of the great masters *for ever*."†

> "4498. Is it not desirable that what is distributed among the members of an art union should be in pure, and rather exalted taste?—*Mr. Eastlake.*—Yes; but it should be as much as possible of a perfect kind, and no sketch can be perfect; it is only a sketch of something that may be made perfect."

The only conclusion that can be drawn from Mr. Eastlake's twaddling reply is, that he considers "outlines in the manner of Retsch," and "works of living artists" of a more "perfect kind" than the drawings of Michael Angelo and Raphael; but, as I can well believe, without any great stretch of imagination, that Sir Robert Peel's "eminent artist" is

* James Harris. † Reynolds.

utterly unconscious of his own meaning, I will, by way of hypothesis, argue that if he were asked what he really meant, he would pause ere he made so startling an assertion. Now, as every work of human production has its defects, even "outlines in the manner of Retsch," and "works of other living artists" must be subject to this law. It appears to me, therefore, that if the "defects" in the drawings of Michael Angelo and Raphael are less (and he must be an impudent man who would say to the contrary,) than those in "the outlines in the manner of Retsch," or in the "fine-enough works of living artists," the influence of the former must be less corruptive; and that they ought for this reason to be preferred. If, on the other hand, the "beauties" in the drawings of Michael Angelo and Raphael are of a more exalted character than those in "the outlines in the manner of Retsch," or in "the works of living artists," (which few, besides Royal Academicians will deny,) the former ought still to be preferred for their superior excellence, and, consequently, greater power in elevating our taste. This admitted, as I believe it will be by every man of sense, Mr. Eastlake, with all "the consummate knowledge of art" with which Sir Robert Peel has supplied him, will find it very puzzling to assign any respectable reason why the disgusting outlines of Retsch, or prints from the corrupt "works of living artists," should be issued as a means of "promoting public taste and the higher class of art," in preference to the marvellous and pure drawings of Michael Angelo and Raphael.

"The style of Michael Angelo, now no longer exists, as it did in the fifteenth century; yet, with the aid of diligence, we may, in a great measure, supply the deficiency of not having his works so perpetually before our eyes—by having recourse to casts from his models and designs in sculpture; to *drawings*, or even *copies* of those drawings; to *prints*, which, however ill-executed, still convey something by which *this taste may be formed*, and a *relish* may be *fixed and established* in our minds for this grand style of invention. Some examples of this kind we have in the Academy, *and I sincerely wish there were more;* that the *younger* students might, *in their first nourishment*, imbibe this taste; whilst others, though settled in the practice

of the common-place style of painters, might infuse, by this means, a grandeur into their works. To recover this lost taste, I would recommend *young* artists to study the works of Michael Angelo, as he himself did the works of the ancient sculptors; *he began when a child.*" *

> "4499. You think that in engravings or drawings such as those, the public would not discriminate between beauties and defects? —*Mr. Eastlake.*—I think not; I believe that was the reason why they were not purchased by the Government in Lord Grey's time; there was an idea that it was inexpedient to place such works before the eyes of the public, because the mass of spectators could not relish them."

This is an implied approval of the government not having secured the unrivalled Lawrence collection of Michael Angelo and Raphael drawings; for, if we are to believe Mr. Eastlake, they were not purchased, because Lord Grey's government thought it "inexpedient to place such works before the public;" in which view he agrees, for, he has just told us that he not only does not consider them "of a class to put into the hands of uncultivated amateurs," but that he regards outlines in the vile "manner of Retsch," and prints from the works of "living artists," (which are as corrupt as the drawings of Michael Angelo and Raphael are pure,) as better adapted to "promote public taste and a higher class of art." In this preposterous notion of habituating the mind to inferiority, in the expectation that it can hence derive the power of appreciating what is admirable, we have still further evidence of the complete perversion of Mr. Eastlake's ideas. The *uninitiated* student, whether he aspire to become an intelligent amateur, or to the far higher position of a great artist, is not expected "to discriminate between beauties and defects," in works whose merits "have stood the test of ages," and which require years of laborious study to comprehend them. His advancement will be in proportion to his *confidence* in them: a consummate knowledge of their excellences can alone teach him their defects.

To expect efficiency from trustees utterly ignorant of art, who never meddle but they make themselves ridiculous, or intelligence

* Reynolds.

and spirit from a keeper who has repeatedly proved himself entirely destitute of both, would be an absurdity. If we aspire to raise a superstructure worthy of the glorious foundation of our National Collection, it is absolutely necessary that we devise some plan very different to that pursued of late years, and find an officer equal to the responsibility of carrying it into execution—one who, to the education of a gentleman, unites an *independent spirit* and long familiarity with the greatest works of the greatest masters:—certainly, not one who bows to the authority of an ignorant *picture-cleaner*—recommends issuing outlines in the manner of Retsch, and prints from "the works of living artists" as a means of promoting "a higher class of art"—and discountenances, as injurious to "uncultivated amateurs," the stupendous and classical drawings of Michael Angelo and Raphael. Mediocrity and mawkish sentimentality not only enervate the mind, but they destroy all chance of future progress. The works of Phidias in the British Museum ought to be our models in the formation of a Public Gallery. Pictures which nearest approximate the grandeur and beauty of those divine performances, should be the objects of our *search*—works capable not only of expanding the *faculties* of the beholder, but of making him fancy that his very "frame is enlarged" while he contemplates them. Pre-eminent in this class stand the productions of Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Sebastiano del Piombo, for design, expression, and form; and those of Giorgione, Titian, and Correggio, for grandeur of colouring and chiaroscuro. If the government were steadily to pursue such a course, the noble example would be speedily followed in our Provincial Museums, and England might then aspire to the glory of reviving the spirit which animated the ages of Phidias and of Michael Angelo.

The greatest efforts have been made by certain persons to hush up this National Gallery business:—several spirited letters (copies of some of which I have seen) against its manifold abuses, were sent to different papers, but they have not been allowed to appear, while every facility was afforded to the supporters of abuses; but this, as might have been expected, has served only to further expose the practices of their patrons. The friends of

art are now, I trust, too deeply interested in the matter, to suffer it to rest until a public and *impartial* enquiry has been instituted: and let them bear in mind that the decision of the trustees, if an *honest* one, is a distinct pledge *that every picture in the gallery, is to be treated as the "Peace and War:"* the operations on that picture have been pronounced "*entirely satisfactory.*" Should there be a public enquiry, many able and independent men will doubtless then come forward, and fearlessly advocate what is right.* But should my hopes in this be disappointed, I shall derive some consolation when I reflect that I at least entered an energetic protest against official barbarism, propped up by the most contemptible imbecility, *prevarication*, and "FLUNKEYISM."

VERAX.

* I will here state that Mr. Morris Moore desires that his letter to the Earl of Ellesmere, which is printed in the "Minutes," and was "referred to Mr. Eastlake in order that he might make his report to the trustees" &c., may be considered as a deliberate reiteration of the charges it contains.

FINIS.

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