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A CONCISE REVIEW,

&c. &c.

[Price One Shilling.]

(4*)

J. TYLER, Printer,
Margaret-street, Cavendish-square.

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A

CONCISE REVIEW
 OF THE
CONCISE VINDICATION
 OF THE
CONDUCT OF THE FIVE SUSPENDED MEMBERS
OF THE COUNCIL
 OF
THE ROYAL ACADEMY.



Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee. St. Luke.

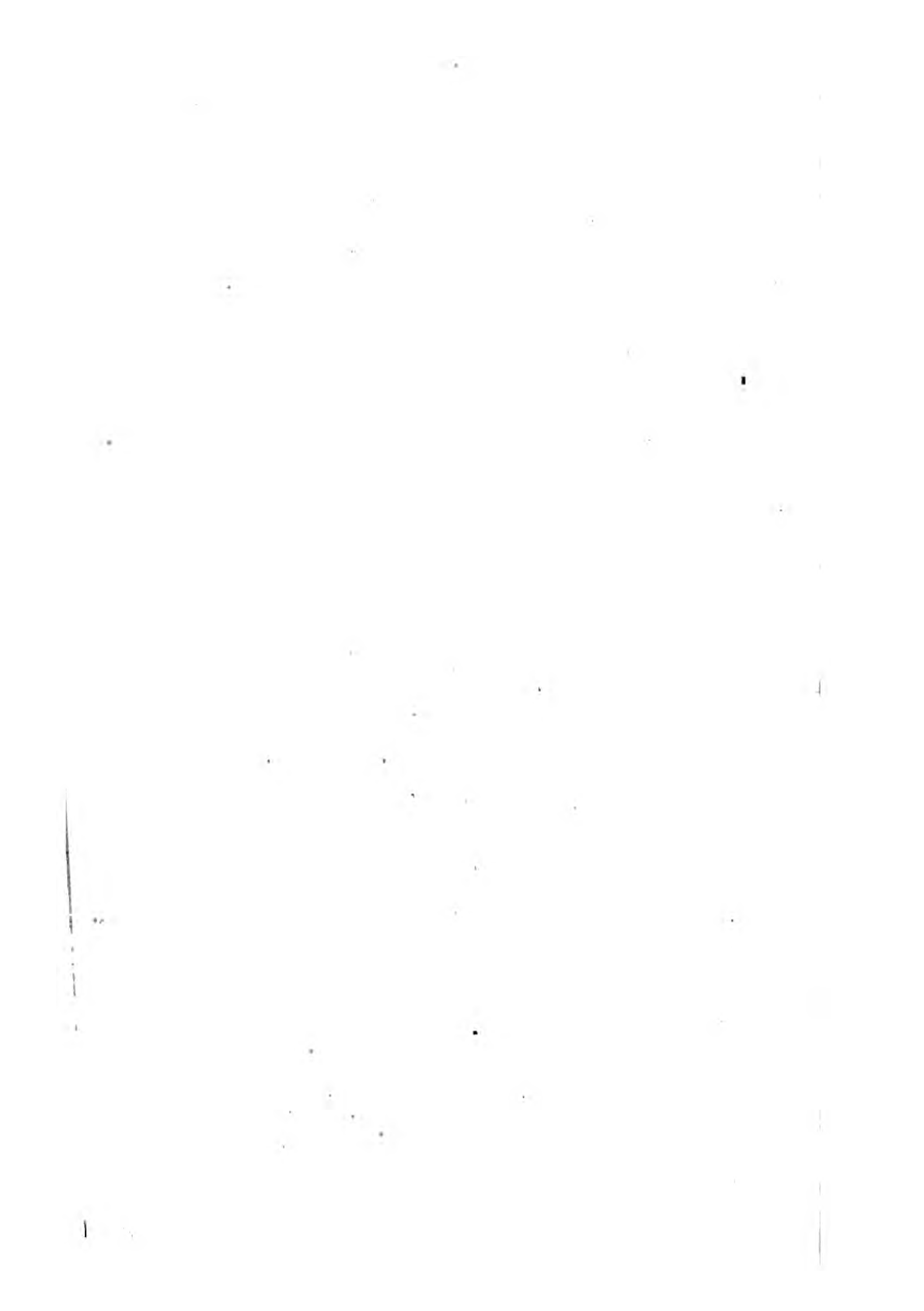
———Man, proud man!
 Drest in a *little brief authority,*
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,
 (His glassy essence,) like an angry ape,
 Plays such fantastic tricks before HIGH HEAV'N
 As make the angels weep.———

——— Authority, though it err,
 Hath yet a kind of med'cine in itself
 That *skins the vice o'th' top.*——— *Measure for Measure.*

LONDON :

Printed for the Author ; and published by Messrs. T. N.
 Longman and O. Rees, Paternoster-Row ; T. Cadell
 and W. Davies, Strand ; and W. Miller,
 Old Bond-Street,

1804.



A

CONCISE REVIEW,

Éc. Éc.

“CALL things by their right names, Brother *Vindicator*, and look through the key-hole as long as you will.” This *vindication*, as it is styled, is neither more nor less than a public *accusation* of the majority (or obnoxious and “*indecent party*,” as this Author has the decency to term it) of the Royal Academicians. It is a masked battery of five guns, of very heavy metal, and marked with the broad arrow.

A vindication is publicly offered, though no charge had been publicly preferred, against JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY, JAMES WYATT, JOHN YENN, and

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JOHN SOANE, Esquires, and SIR FRANCIS BOURGEOIS; and, like a quack medicine, it is vended **By Authority**; though by *what* authority the Author has not thought it prudent to mention. Both authority and author are sheltered behind the masked battery, so mildly and humanely opened upon a vanquished adversary, whilst in the very act of prostration at the feet of royalty.

Be it remembered that these five gentlemen were the leading members of the sapient COUNCIL that, after rejecting MR. WEST'S picture, made the same kind of ostentatious and uncalled-for display of their own immaculate motives, as on the present occasion: that, not content with the "little brief authority" with which the laws of the Academy had invested them, must assume, as in the present instance, a vigour beyond the law, and, instead of Hagar and Ishmael, *exhibit themselves*. Upon that occasion it was not enough for these gentlemen, in the discreet exercise of discretionary power, silently to reject MR. WEST'S, as they did hundreds of other pictures, but

their PRESIDENT must be publicly traduced and vilified by the basest insinuations—a deep shade must be cast over his intentions, in order to show off the *enlightened* COUNCIL with the greater effect ; and on the present occasion, it is not sufficient that the suspended members are reinstated in their functions, and the obnoxious act of suspension erased from the archives of the Academy—even the high favour and sanction of the SOVEREIGN, so abundantly gratifying to most men, satisfies not their thirst of ascendancy: no—their victorious return to office, and the defeat of their adversaries, (a considerable majority of the members of the Royal Academy,) must be blazoned to the public in a “ Concise Vindication,” of forty-six pages, conceived in malice or egregious mistake, penned in affected candour, and fraught with the incalculable mischiefs that must result from a succession of adverse councils, if uncontrolled by the collective wisdom of the Academy.

They profess, indeed, “ no wish to revive, in

any shape, a disagreeable and vexatious contest," (but what is the obvious tendency of their pamphlet?) and "no *undue* resentment of past injuries." They would have us believe that they are actuated by "fair, manly," and "honourable" motives: but where is the *fairness* of heaping obloquy on a majority of their fellows? Where is the *manliness* of triumphing over a disarmed and fallen adversary? And where is the *honour* of divulging the proceedings of a body, whose deliberations are confidential, without their concurrence? Perhaps these gentlemen may hereafter discover that they have permitted some person, with sinister views, to force into public notice, occurrences, which of all others, among professors of liberal arts, point the most directly to oblivion.

But the resolution of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, suspending the five members from their functions, was "industriously inserted," it is said, in the public prints. That the virtue of industry should have been so abused, is surely to be lamented: yet

was not the return and re-investment of the five members inserted also, and with such additional circumstances of eclat, as must at least have balanced the account of notoriety ?

After sympathising with the severity of their sufferings, and vaunting the unsullied purity of their motives, which the Author seems not without fear that the public might not else have credited, he proceeds to say, that “ though *convinced* as well of the *propriety* of their own conduct as of the illegal and violent proceedings of their adversaries, they were *compelled*, from the *peculiar circumstances* of their *situation*, to sustain in silence this general and undeserved odium. Before they could present their cause to the public, it was necessary to appeal to ANOTHER TRIBUNAL.”

What these peculiar and compulsory circumstances were, the reader is left to imagine, unless the five gentlemen in question, being at that time members of the COUNCIL, is meant to be implied—a

circumstance which did not, however, in the affair of MR. WEST'S picture, where they could not be *more* than "convinced of the propriety of their own conduct," prevent them from giving that illiberal proceeding all possible publicity. But their *legal* advocate will perhaps contend that here "the case is altered."

"Before they *could* present their cause to the public, it was *necessary* to appeal to *another tribunal*." What does this imply, but that these gentlemen either feared the decision of the public, or thought that the public were not competent judges? Yet this very same public were supposed by these very same gentlemen to be excellent good judges in the affair of the picture which they were *not to see*. We must recollect, however, that allegory is among the most flourishing and fertile of the provinces of Art, and the bandage before the eyes of Astrea may serve to mark the superior discernment and rigorous impartiality of those artists who dispense with her scales.

In the seventh page of this "defensive" pamphlet, its Author promises to "expose the motives and views of the party" by whom he has been so highly offended; which is more than insinuating that the majority of the members of the Royal Academy entertain views, and are actuated by motives, hostile to the interests of the institution. This promise, however, he does not otherwise perform, than by a more direct and unqualified accusation, unless we allow his virulent and opprobrious epithets to pass for such exposure. It is true, in another place*, which affords a very undisguised specimen of this Author's candour, he reproves the *undisguisedness* of their proceedings, and might think it unnecessary to expose what was undisguised, though he had thought it necessary to threaten it. Perhaps he forgot, in one place, what he had written in the other. But could he forget—could he allow himself to ap-

* In page 9, he says "Several *very undisguised* attempts had been made to encroach upon the powers of the Council, and gradually *transfer* the government of the Academy from that body to the General Assembly."

pear so habituated to deception, so bigotted to disguise, so blindly trammelled in the arts of simulation, as to forget that others would view *undisguisedness* as an evidence of just dealing and conscientious rectitude of intention? Indeed upon what rational or what presumptuous principle this man can hope to be credited, in calumniating the *intentions* of the majority of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the Royal Academicians; or with what face of decency he will dare to reiterate his irrational and insulting mockeries; or with what effrontery he will persist in asserting the wisdom of a code of laws and regulations, which enacts such palpable contradictions on points of importance to the well-being of the institution, as those of the ROYAL ACADEMY; or how he will proceed in demonstrating the interests of the institution to be distinct from the interests of the majority of those who have attained its highest honours, it is no easy matter to imagine.

He does not go so far as to say that the GENERAL ASSEMBLY is, or ought to be, subordinate to the

COUNCIL: he may probably foresee, though he does not care to acknowledge, that, to make the stationary and perennial part of the government subordinate to the annually moveable part, would involve the elements of distraction: or perhaps he may think that though a work of art cannot subsist as a symmetric whole, without subordination of parts, that a society of artists may, I believe he must either think thus, (if he thinks at all,) or he must fancy that it will be agreeable to the royal founder and patron of the institution to be troubled with the frequent clashings of arbitrary and adverse COUNCILS; for we must recollect that successive COUNCILS will be likely to differ from each other as much as the late COUNCIL from the GENERAL ASSEMBLY; and after all, a very simple calculation will shew that this wicked—this “outrageous” majority will find more COUNCILS favourable than unfavourable to their projects. Nay, the moment their *detestable* partizans shall form a majority in the COUNCIL, (a moment which may be long foreseen and prepared for,) will this indecent and fla-

gitious majority, proceed to the perpetration of *unheard-of* crimes: for HIS MAJESTY (whom the late COUNCIL appear erroneously to imagine has reinstated them, and prevented the misapplication of the funds of the Society, *in consequence of their appeal,*) in the benignity of a heart ever rejoicing in the harmony and welfare of his subjects, will naturally be pleased at the restoration of concord between the GENERAL ASSEMBLY and COUNCIL of the Royal Academy.

I have assumed that the wisdom which framed the original laws of this institution, is at least questionable. I say this from no personal motives, for I know not who were its legislators, and doubt not but their intentions were good; but I think (though much more might be said on the subject) that there needs no clearer proof of this questionability, than the doubts and dissensions that have arisen with regard to the tantamount or paramount authority of the COUNCIL for the time being, as it respects that of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

An impartial observer, who is far removed from the heat and smoke of the combat, I hope may, without danger, be allowed to discuss these points; at least, to form and to state his opinions thereon, with English freedom. He does not, however, purpose to reprint, or to comment on, the whole of the abstract of the Academic laws, (which is in every hand,) but merely to offer a few remarks, sufficient, he presumes, to confirm his argument, on such of their leading features as are termed "clear and explicit" by the Author of the vindication in question.

"There shall be annually one GENERAL MEETING, or *or more if requisite*, of the whole body," (and of *this requisiteness the judgment of the PRESIDENT** is the criterion,) "to elect a president, council,"—
Elect a *council*?—Yes, "the clear and explicit language" of these laws directs the GENERAL ASSEM-

* "The President shall have power to summon the Council and General Assemblies of the Royal Academicians as often as *he shall think it necessary*."

BLY to *elect* a COUNCIL; and the Author of the Vindication, in *his** abstract of the laws, and in language *equally* clear and explicit, passes this over, (for the sake of *brevity*, no doubt,) by saying the whole body shall meet “for the purpose of electing the *different* officers of the Academy,” &c.—But to proceed :

“There shall be annually one GENERAL MEETING of the whole body, or more if requisite, to elect a president, council, visitors, and auditors; to adjudge the premiums to be given to the students; to elect those who are to be sent abroad; to *hear complaints and redress grievances*, and do *any other business* relative to the Society.”—Enough, indeed, to make the poor mistaken PRESIDENT and GENERAL ASSEMBLY imagine themselves to *be* invested with some *little* power. Here seems “the word of promise to the ear;” but next come the mysterious powers of the COUNCIL, that (like the Witches in Macbeth) were to “break it to their hopes.”

* See Vindication, p. 8.

“ For the government of the Academy there shall be annually *elected** a PRESIDENT, and eight other *persons* who shall form a COUNCIL, which shall have *the entire direction and management of all the BUSINESS* of the Society.”

The reader cannot but observe, here, either that this *entire direction and management* must be supposed under the control of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, which is an absurdity *in terms*, or else that electing the officers, adjudging the premiums, electing those who are to be sent abroad, hearing complaints and redressing grievances, constitutes no part of the *business* of the Society ; for these are among the specified duties of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. I say *among* their duties, because they are likewise directed “ to do *any other BUSINESS relative to the Society* ;” which involves us in fresh difficulties, nay, in chaotic obscurity, respecting their *business*, and

* Here we again find the word *elected*; yet in another place it is ordained that “ the seats in the Council shall go, by *succession*, to all the Academicians.”

makes us wish that "the running light," so poetically introduced in our Author's peroration, had happened to glance upon the specification of the respective duties of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY and COUNCIL.

Such is the ground upon which the Author of the Vindication has erected his formidable battery; such is the rank soil in which the academic dissention, which our Author fondly flattered himself is rooted out, must infallibly flourish. Indeed, an impartial observer can scarcely read the Vindication, and avoid thinking that its Author is conscious of sowing fresh seeds of dissention. He *seems* to cherish the erroneous hope that they will thrive in the sunshine of Royal favour; he appears to water them from a copious fountain of abusive flattery, and to manure them abundantly with flattering abuse*: but if this were really so, we might still indulge the hope that he would kill them with kindness.

* "His praise is censure, and his censure praise."

After tracing (*in his way*) the general outline of the constitution of the Royal Academy, he proceeds to inform us, that “ it was repeatedly declared by the members of the *prevailing party*,” (by which the reader will understand that party which prevailed **BECAUSE they formed a majority**,) “ that the **COUNCIL** was *subordinate* to the **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**, and *responsible* to it for their conduct and proceedings.” Wonderful assurance, indeed! So, those who are directed, and foolishly thought themselves *empowered*, to “ redress grievances,” had audaciously presumed to imagine that the **COUNCIL** of eight members was *subordinate* and *responsible* to the **GENERAL ASSEMBLY** of forty! Whereas a part is greater than the whole: there is more wisdom in eight R. As. than in forty; and the majority of these eight are, for the short season of their authority, invested with arbitrary and uncontrolable power.

They naturally will, under such circumstances, like the five re-instated members, make the most of their time: but then will not this cunning, this in-

decent majority of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, finding themselves stripped, “by authority,” of the pleasing exercise of the power to redress grievances, and that they can *not* “do *any other* business relative to the Society,”—will they not, thus situated, be very circumspect at elections? It is pretty well known that *majorities*, even though not the most pure, are very likely to succeed, at elections, in favour of the candidates whose causes they espouse, or who espouse theirs; and if the majority in question be really instigated by motives adverse to the welfare of the institution, will not the *designing* fellows, instead of selecting the best artists to fill such seats in the Academy as may fall vacant, choose those most likely to become subservient to their own views, and thus sooner or later obtain a succession of majorities in the COUNCILS favourable to the indecent outrages they are panting to commit? It is a law, respecting which there is no longer any dispute, that the new members are to come into power before the old ones re-occupy seats in the COUNCIL; and thus, notwithstanding “an effectual barrier has been raised against future

encroachments, and the constitution of the Academy is fixed upon a *permanent* and *immoveable* * basis," these sly rogues, of "unremitting activity and inflexible perseverance," may possibly accomplish their detestable purposes.

Sanctioned (as *he says*) by the highest power, and nerved by the zeal of indignant virtue, the Author of the Vindication is not content with simply stating the law, but he reiterates that HIS MAJESTY, "by the very terms of the constitution, has invested the COUNCIL with the initiative in every act of legislation, and expressly entrusted it with the sole and *exclusive* direction of ALL the business of the Society." The Gunner here flourishes his lighted match for the third † time previous to his royal salute, and dazzled by its brightness, overlooks in his argument, what he has been obliged to state in his Appendix: namely, that "if *any* member" (this must surely mean whether of the COUNCIL or not) "*become ob-*

* Such is the Author's boast, in page 39.

† See Vindication, pp. 9. 12. and 15. where this dogmatical sentence is repeated, with little variation.

noxious to the Society by improper conduct, he may be *reprimanded, suspended, or expelled* BY THE MAJORITY OF A GENERAL ASSEMBLY *of Academicians*, to be decided by ballot, and subject to HIS MAJESTY'S pleasure."

In this law, as well as in that which ordains that the laws and regulations originating in the COUNCIL, "shall have no force till ratified by the consent of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, and the approbation of the KING," there appears a plain and obvious recognition of a controlling power vested in that GENERAL ASSEMBLY which the PRESIDENT may summon as often as he sees occasion. Something like *subordination* and *responsibility* is here discernible, which the Author of the Vindication would deprecate, but which others have thought essential to the well-being of every Society.

Whether the COUNCIL possess a *constitutional right* of appealing to the KING, without the concurrence of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, I may doubt, but cannot discuss, since such a right *may possibly* be recognized

among the bye-laws of the institution, which are not accessible to strangers.

The reader will please to bear in mind, that it is not on account of friendship or dislike entertained for any set of men, that a person unused to writing for the public (as is perhaps but too obvious) ventures to offer, in these pages, an antidote to the deleterious drugs which, assuming the semblance, and possessing, no doubt, the virtues ; are vended with all the parade of a patent medicine, professing to renovate the *constitution* which it really undermines. I am no advocate for the tergiversations of the President, nor the weaknesses of the Secretary, nor the remissness of the Professor of Architecture, nor the incorrectness of Mr. Farington, (*if* these circumstances were as this writer reports,) and no adherent of the party he opposes ; but while they form a MAJORITY in the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, I must recoil from the injustice of stigmatising them with the opprobrious epithets which this Author, in the fervour of his zeal for the five members who were lately suspended from their functions, has thought proper

to bestow on them. It will indeed afford some excuse for this gentleman, if his father be among the five Academicians in question; because youth is the season of temerity, and filial piety is a virtue amiable even in error: but this can be no reason why others should tamely suffer the public to be led into the adoption of such error. I am, moreover, no friend to the law which empowers the majority of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY to *expel* obnoxious members; since they might thus expel any number short of twenty, which not only appears a dangerous power, but is not requisite to the object of controlling the COUNCIL. Indeed when we reflect, that among professors of the fine arts (whom we should presume to be men of ingenuous feeling,) the pain of thinking with a powerless minority is of itself no inconsiderable suffering, when contrasted with the pleasure of thinking and acting with the majority, the expelling* power

* The recollection, of I believe the only instance on record, of the exercise of this extraordinary power of expelling obnoxious Academicians, fills me with deep concern, and makes me wish, more than I wished before, that this law had never found a place in the Academic code. From those who have attained the honour of occupying the first rank among the votaries of the liberal arts, we expect a

seems as unnecessary among good, as it would be dangerous to be entrusted to bad men.

It is not, then, for any of these reasons that the public is troubled with a second Pamphlet on this disagreeable subject : it is because I am one of those (to whom the Vindication professes to address itself) “ who take a laudable interest in the progress of the Arts :” it is because I hate the *affectation*, as much as I love the reality, of moderation and candour : it is because I see a libellous accusation hypocritically brought forward against the majority of the members corresponding principle of appreciation ; and the friends of genius might rationally hope that he who had decorated and led forth the triumphal procession of Art and Philosophy, should have been regarded, at the ROYAL ACADEMY, rather by the magnitude of his merits, than his freedom from defects ; yet on that distressing occasion did the Royal Academy of Arts, (aye, the majority whom I am blaming this Vindicator for attacking, and who may retort upon me here,) instituted by the best of Sovereigns for the protection and culture of talent, expel from their Society (and with an ignominy which time seems now to retaliate upon their laws) an Artist of the highest class—one, whom posterity, if not his cotemporaries, will proclaim, in the words of his own Lear, “ a man more sinned against than sinning,” and the independence of whose principles, and the greatness of whose mind, made the errors of his enthusiasm seem far too trivial to call down such mighty resentment.

of the British School of Arts, of having “laboured to subvert those laws, and lay prostrate that constitution, which they were bound, by every tie of honour, and by every principle of duty, to uphold and support: it is because an *imperium in imperio* has ever been held absurd, and destructive to itself: it is because I behold, in the Vindication, a weak and foolish attempt to inculcate the arbitrary and anarchical doctrine of power without responsibility, and government without subordination: and because (trusting that no man—not even the Vindicator, will confound a wish to improve, with an endeavour to subvert, the institution,) I have no hesitation in asserting, and hope I have proved, that **THE LAWS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY CALL LOUDLY FOR REVISAL AND CORRECTION.**

I shall not follow this *concise* writer through all his amplifications, lest we should prove tedious, and the spirit of the argument be evaporated by the ardour of contest. To his statement of the benevolent intentions of the **SOVEREIGN** I heartily subscribe; but when he would trace *all* our excellence in the Arts up to

the institution of the Royal Academy, the public will recollect the names and the works of REYNOLDS, HOGARTH, WILSON, MORTIMER, GAINSBOROUGH, WREN, RYSBRACK, ROUBILIAC, CIPRIANI, BARRY, WEST, DE LOUTHERBOURG, COPLEY, VIVARES, BARTOLOZZI, WOOLLETT, &c. Let him who sounds forth the praises of the institution and laws of the ROYAL ACADEMY, and compliments the KING on its success, in strains of such fulsome panegyric as may well appear suspicious, read the above names of Artists, whose talents were not cultivated at the Academy, and let him produce an equal number of Academic growth and *superior* ability, and the public may perhaps be disposed to think with him, or at least to think more favourably than they can at present, of the wisdom of those who legislated for the Royal Academy; and let him recal his blasts of adulation, and temper his praises with unfeigned respect, if he wishes to obtain credit with HIS MAJESTY,

From too high authority for this writer to dispute, we derive a simple and infallible test, by which to decide on the merits or demerits of this, and of every

other human institution that can be brought before the judgment: "By their *fruits* ye shall know them." Now, if the Arts of PAINTING, SCULPTURE, and ARCHITECTURE, which have been cultivated at the Royal Academy (if cultivation, under the present system, it may be called) have improved rather in the increased number of their profersors, than in any decided attainment of superior excellence, since its institution—if the Art of ENGRAVING, of high value in a moral view, and in a commercial country, has not been cultivated at the Academy at all—if the majority of Royal Academicians, whose proceedings this Vindicator so strenuously reprobates, should blow aside the incense which it suits his purpose to offer to their professional exertions, the discerning part of the public will reserve their approbation of the existing laws of this institution, till a fairer occasion offers of bestowing it with justice and advantage.

THE END.