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A

CONCISE VINDICATION,

&c. &c.

THE following plain and authentic statement of facts, relative to a transaction of some importance, is offered to the unbiassed opinion and judgment of the world:— It is, in particular, submitted to the serious and attentive consideration of those who take a laudable interest in the progress of the arts, and in the prosperity of a truly noble establishment, founded by the munificence and protected by the superintending care and patronage of our present SOVEREIGN.

The motives which have led to this publication, are of a nature purely DEFENSIVE. It has originated in no improper spirit of hostility;—in no undue resentment for past injuries;—from no wish to revive, in any shape, a disagreeable and vexatious contest:—it has proceeded solely from a fair, manly, honourable desire to remove that obloquy, and to repel those calumnies to which even the strictest propriety of conduct, and the utmost rectitude of intention, are sometimes unfortunately exposed.

A



It will scarcely be necessary to inform the public, that five of the members, constituting a *majority*, of the COUNCIL of the Royal Academy, were, in the month of May last, suspended from the exercise of their functions, by a vote of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. The names of the suspended members were, John Singleton Copley, James Wyatt, John Yenn, John Soane, and Sir Francis Bourgeois. This humiliating sentence was industriously inserted, without explanation, in the public papers of the metropolis; from which it was afterwards copied into all the foreign journals. At Paris, at Berlin, at Vienna, at Petersburgh, wherever the arts, wherever literature is known and cultivated, this extraordinary circumstance became a subject of general observation and comment*. The impression was, of course, uniformly unfavourable to the suspended members. It was concluded that some instance of gross misconduct, some evident neglect of duty, some flagrant violation of the laws of the institution, could alone have occasioned a sentence so unusual and severe.

In the mean time, the members themselves, though convinced as well of the propriety of their own

* It was not confined to the continent of Europe. The vote of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY crossed the Atlantic—to America, the “terra al-trix” of the President, and was inserted in the periodical publications of that country.

conduct as of the illegal and violent proceedings of their adversaries, 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. They humbly submitted the particulars of their conduct, and the measures pursued by the President and GENERAL ASSEMBLY, to the KING; and expected, with the firmness of conscious rectitude, HIS MAJESTY'S decision. That decision is now upon record; and as the unjust and illegal sentence pronounced against them, has been thus extensively diffused, it becomes proper that, in vindication of their own characters,—in order to justify themselves to their country, to Europe, and to posterity, they should distinctly relate the circumstances of this transaction, and expose the motives and views of that party by which they have been thus publicly and indecently traduced.

In order that the following narrative may be rendered completely distinct and intelligible, it will be proper to trace, in a very few words, the outline of the constitution of the Royal Academy. This constitution was framed under the immediate direction of HIS MAJESTY, and was submitted to the opinion of one of the highest legal characters of the country, previously to the establishment

of the institution. It declares, in substance,—“ That the society shall consist of forty members, who shall be styled Academicians of the Royal Academy.—That, *for the government of the society*, there shall be annually appointed 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.—That the seats in *the COUNCIL shall go by succession* to all the Academicians :—that four of the COUNCIL shall go out in rotation every year :—and that these shall not re-occupy their seats until all the rest of the Academicians shall have served.—That the COUNCIL shall *frame all new laws and regulations*, but that they shall have no force till ratified by the consent of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, and the approbation of the KING.—That all the officers and servants of the Academy, shall be *subservient to the COUNCIL*, which shall have power to reform all abuses ; to censure such as are deficient in their duty ; and, with the consent of the general body, and the KING’S permission, first obtained for that purpose, to suspend or entirely remove from their employments, such as shall be found guilty of any great offences.—That there shall be annually, *one GENERAL MEETING*, or more, *if requisite*, of the whole body, for the purpose of electing the different officers of the Academy,—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 to do any other business relative to the society*.”

Notwithstanding the clear and explicit language of these laws,—notwithstanding, by the very letter of the constitution, the COUNCIL was invested, not only with the initiative in every act of legislation, but also with “the entire direction and management of all the business of the society,” yet several very undisguised attempts had been made to encroach upon its powers, and gradually to transfer the government of the Academy from that body to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. These attempts had given occasion to much disagreeable debate and contention. In the course of these discussions, it was repeatedly declared, by the members of the prevailing party in the Academy, that the COUNCIL was *subordinate* to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, and subject to its direction and authority; and that the members of the COUNCIL were individually responsible, for their conduct and proceedings in that character, to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. Unfounded and extraordinary as these opinions must appear, they had been acted upon in many important instances. The

* See the Appendix.

† It will be sufficient, in confirmation of this statement, to refer to

President, who was annually dependent, for his election, upon the votes of the party, acquiesced in this usurpation. In order, therefore, to terminate a controversy so pregnant with mischief to the institution, the COUNCIL determined, as its only resource, to appeal to the authority and decision of the SOVEREIGN. For this purpose, the following resolutions were proposed, at a meeting of the COUNCIL held on the 24th of last May*.

I. “RESOLVED, That as much difference of opinion
 “has arisen in the Academy, relative to the respective
 “powers of the COUNCIL and the GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
 “the COUNCIL has considered itself, under these circum-
 “stances, in duty bound to declare, and record it, as its
 “deliberate opinion,—that the COUNCIL, being by the
 “laws of the institution invested with ‘the entire
 “direction and management of all the business of the
 “society,’ is in no respect whatever *subordinate* to the

the following resolution, which was passed by the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, early in March;—nearly three months before the proposed appeal to the KING.

“RESOLVED—That the GENERAL MEETING, seeing strong grounds
 “to disapprove of the proceedings of Sir Francis Bourgeois, James Wy-
 “att, John Yenn, and John Singleton Copley, Esqrs. as *Members of the*
 “*Council*, do request the President to call a GENERAL ASSEMBLY to take
 “*their conduct into consideration.*”

* These resolutions were moved by Mr. Copley, and seconded by Sir Francis Bourgeois.

“ GENERAL ASSEMBLY ; and that the members of the
“ COUNCIL are not responsible either collectively or in-
“ dividually, to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, for their pro-
“ ceedings in the COUNCIL.”

II. “ RESOLVED, That the President, attended by the
“ proper officers, do wait upon HIS MAJESTY, as soon
“ as possible, with the above resolution, and humbly
“ request that HIS MAJESTY will be graciously pleased
“ to express his sentiments thereon, for the future
“ guidance and direction of the Royal Academy.”

These resolutions were approved and voted by a majority of the COUNCIL, and a subsequent meeting was appointed for the purpose of *confirming* this determination.

In the mean time, the proceedings of the COUNCIL were communicated to the leaders of the prevailing party, in the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. The language of the law was too clear and unequivocal to permit them to entertain any doubt with respect to HIS MAJESTY'S decision. They immediately perceived that this measure would be fatal to the accomplishment of their views. They determined, therefore, at least to suspend the blow, and to endeavour, by the boldness of their conduct, to terrify the COUNCIL into submission. For

this purpose, they prevailed upon the President, who was already sufficiently disposed in favour of their wishes, to assist them in the prosecution of a measure, the indecency of which is almost forgotten in the consideration of its gross illegality and violence.

The President issued an order, revoking the appointed meeting of COUNCIL*, and immediately *convened* the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. The proceedings of the COUNCIL,—of that body, to which HIS MAJESTY had ordered that all the officers of the Academy should be subservient,—which he had entrusted, not only with the exclusive privilege of framing every new law and regulation, but with the entire direction and management of all the business of the society, were submitted without its authority, and in direct opposition to the letter and spirit of the laws †, to the consideration of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

* This order was issued only a few hours before the COUNCIL was to have assembled. It was expressed in the following terms.

SIR,

The President has directed me to inform you that the COUNCIL which he proposed to have been this evening, he does postpone till further notice.

Royal Academy,
May 26th, 1803.

I am, Sir, &c. &c.
JOHN RICHARDS, R. A. Sec.

† It is expressly enacted that no law or regulation made in the COUNCIL shall be presented to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY before it has been *confirmed* at a subsequent meeting, (Vide Appendix). The President had *himself* decided that these resolutions came within the

But these extraordinary measures were carried to a still greater excess of indecency and outrage. The records of the COUNCIL were seized. A most violent and tumultuous debate ensued. It was proposed, as an introductory step to the important blow which the party had concerted, "that the thanks of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY should be presented to Benjamin West, Esq. President, *for his provident care of the constitution of the Royal Academy*.*" This proposition being adopted, it was immediately succeeded by the following decisive resolution.

"RESOLVED,

"That it appears to the GENERAL MEETING of Academicians, from the statement of the President and from the books of the COUNCIL, that the conduct of John Singleton Copley, James Wyatt, John Yenn, John Soane, Esquires, and Sir Francis Bourgeois, IN THE COUNCIL on the 24th of May, 1803, has rendered it expedient to SUSPEND PRO TEMPORE THE SAID

above clause; and a second meeting of the COUNCIL was accordingly appointed, *by his desire*. That appointment, however, was afterwards revoked, and the resolutions were submitted, *without confirmation*, to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

* A motion expressed in these terms was introduced by Mr. FLAXMAN, the sculptor.

“ MEMBERS FROM THEIR FUNCTIONS AS COUNSELLORS
 “ OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY ; and that the President be
 “ requested to summon a GENERAL MEETING on Fri-
 “ day next, June 3d. to TAKE INTO FURTHER CONSIDER-
 “ RATION THE PROCEEDINGS OF COUNCIL on the above
 “ mentioned 24th day of May.’”*

This conduct, so unpardonable in the *GENERAL ASSEMBLY*†, and so much more unpardonable in the President,

* This resolution was moved by Mr. DANCE. With how much propriety, *he* was selected for this purpose, will appear from the following statement. Mr. DANCE, in the month of July, 1798, was appointed Professor of Architecture to the Royal Academy. It is provided by the laws, “ that there shall be a Professor of Architecture, WHO SHALL READ ANNUALLY SIX PUBLIC LECTURES IN THE ROYAL ACADEMY, calculated to form the taste of the students ; to instruct them in the laws and principles of composition ; to point out to them the beauties or faults of celebrated productions ; to fit them for an unprejudiced study of books on the art, and a critical examination of structures.” Mr. DANCE, however, has not read a single lecture since his appointment. He has now held the office nearly *six* years, and still persists in neglecting this most serious and important duty ;—a conduct which is not only directly repugnant to the express letter of the laws, but calculated, both in its immediate and remote effects, to defeat the first and most essential objects of the institution.

It is worthy of remark, that Mr. DANCE, notwithstanding this marked inattention to the duties of his situation as Professor, has lately been elected by the Assembly (in gratitude, no doubt, for the leading part which he took upon the above important occasion) to the additional office of Auditor of the accounts of the Royal Academy-

† It will be proper to state that these proceedings in the *GENERAL ASSEMBLY* were constantly opposed by several of the oldest and most respectable members of the society ;—by Messrs. Wilton, Sandby, Rigaud, Tre-

But what was the conduct on the part of the COUNCIL, which had given occasion to these acts of violence? It had *dared* to appeal to HIS MAJESTY, the patron, the founder, and the perpetual protector of the institution, upon an important constitutional question, intimately connected with the interests of the society. In the *terms* of the resolutions adopted by the COUNCIL upon this occasion, there was nothing of personal hostility, nothing intemperate, or, in any respect, offensive or improper—there was nothing, either in the object or the manner, with which a mind influenced solely by fair and honorable views could possibly have been displeased. The resolutions, after stating what the COUNCIL considered to be the just interpretation of the laws, proceeded to require “that the President should wait upon the King, humbly to request that his Majesty would be graciously pleased to express his sentiments upon this important constitutional question, for the future guidance and direction of the Royal Academy.” Such was the sober, measured, and respectful character of that proceeding, which has been made the pretext for a most unjust attack upon the COUNCIL, and a most indecent and violent inroad upon the laws and constitution of the Academy!

But indecent and outrageous as this conduct must, at first view, appear, there is another consideration which

thus openly laboured to subvert those laws, and to lay prostrate that constitution, which they were thus bound, by every tie of honour, and by every principle of duty, to uphold and support ?

The members of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY having thus suspended the COUNCIL*, immediately proceeded, as the next important step in the prosecution of their object, to dispense with its authority ; and one of their first acts of usurpation, in which they were still supported by the concurrence of the President, was to pass a resolution for contributing the sum of five hundred pounds towards the subscription at Lloyd's : although, by the constitution of the Academy, no appropriation can be made of the general funds, without the express approbation and consent of the COUNCIL†.

* The COUNCIL consists of eight members, of which, *four at least*, exclusive of the President, are requisite to constitute a meeting. (Vide Appendix.) The suspension of the five members was, therefore, in fact, a suspension of the *whole* COUNCIL.

† It is declared in the laws of the Academy, that " the Treasurer shall not be at liberty to dispose of any sums of money, remaining in his, or the banker's hands, *without THE ORDER AND DIRECTION OF COUNCIL* ;" and, with respect to that part of the property which has been already invested in the public securities of the country, it cannot be disposed of without a law passed expressly for the purpose of authorizing the measure. But the constitution has provided that *every* law shall *originate with the COUNCIL*, and be *confirmed* at a *subsequent meeting*, before it is presented to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the Academicians for their

suspended members should resume their seats in the COUNCIL.

It would be improper to relate the particulars of what passed upon these several occasions. It will be sufficient to state, in general terms, that the KING was sensible of the indecent and illegal conduct of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. HIS MAJESTY, however, *determined to suspend* his decision; and, with that impartiality and strict regard to justice, which has, upon every occasion, characterized the FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE, was graciously pleased to submit the respective proceedings of the COUNCIL and the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, together with the laws of the Academy, and the other necessary documents, to the opinion of a HIGH LEGAL AUTHORITY.

That opinion was clear, full, and decisive*. The President was accordingly commanded to attend the KING, accompanied by the Secretary and the Treasurer; and HIS MAJESTY was pleased, upon this occasion, to deliver his gracious determination, in writing, to the *Secretary*. This communication contained in substance,—“ that the KING disapproved of the conduct of the GENERAL AS-

* Some of the members of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY have ventured to assert that no legal authority was consulted upon this occasion. It is hoped that the present statement may remove every doubt upon the subject.

members, would have terminated. It could not indeed be reasonably hoped, that the active leaders of the party would openly acknowledge their error: but it might at least have been supposed that they would have conformed in silence to the KING's decision—that they would have felt, anxiously desirous to bury the past, if possible, in the deepest oblivion. The event, however, has sufficiently shewn, that those *who were inclined to entertain this opinion*, had formed a most erroneous estimate of the character, the temper, and the spirit of that party with which these extraordinary measures had originated.

The terms of His Majesty's order were clear and distinct. It was indeed impossible that any difference of opinion could subsist with respect to his gracious intentions.—HIS MAJESTY “disapproved of the conduct of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY in censuring and suspending the members of the COUNCIL; and therefore ordered and directed that all the matters *relative to these proceedings*, should be expunged from the minutes of the Royal Academy.” To what proceedings then did His Majesty in this communication refer? Evidently to the *vote of censure and suspension* which had been passed against the majority of the COUNCIL. No intelligent man, uninfluenced by the passions, the animosities and the blind

spirit of party, could possibly have contended for any other construction.

It was resolved, however, by the prevailing members of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, that the COUNCIL should participate in their disgrace:—it was resolved that at least an effort should be made to extend His Majesty's expressions of disapprobation and reproof to the previous conduct of the COUNCIL—to that respectful and constitutional measure which had been made the pretext for these repeated acts of violence and outrage.

The COUNCIL, after an interval of six months, during which the business of the Academy had been entirely suspended, was at length convened. The President, evidently acting in concert with the leaders of the party, proposed that the resolutions of the 24th of May, by which he had been required to consult HIS MAJESTY'S pleasure, with regard to the several powers of the COUNCIL and the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, should be erased from the minutes of the COUNCIL. The proposition was made upon the ground that these resolutions were comprehended within the scope and meaning of HIS MAJESTY'S order. This extraordinary measure was of course resisted, not only because it was evidently repugnant to

the fair construction of the order; but because His Majesty, far from being displeased with the proceedings of the COUNCIL, had expressed his decided approbation of their conduct. After a long discussion, it was at length resolved, at the *immediate desire of the President*, that the question should be decided by vote; and it was accordingly determined, by a majority of voices, that these resolutions were not comprehended within His MAJESTY'S order, and that they ought not to be expunged from the records of the COUNCIL.

Defeated and disappointed in this attempt, the party determined to have recourse to the most desperate expedients, in order to effect the accomplishment of their object. The GENERAL ASSEMBLY had been convened to receive the report of the committee appointed to prepare an address to the King, in return for His MAJESTY'S gracious message. At this meeting, the President communicated to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY the determination of COUNCIL. This communication was followed by the most indecent and violent proceedings. The records of the COUNCIL were *again* seized. The obnoxious resolutions were expunged, under the eye and with the consent and sanction of the President, partly by the Secretary and *partly by the hand of* Mr. DANCE, one of the most active and turbulent agents

At the same meeting, the address to HIS MAJESTY was read, in pursuance to the notice, and unanimously approved. This was immediately followed by a series of resolutions, with which, to the utter astonishment of

and the same *constancy* displayed on the part of the President; He at length promised that he would consult the KING upon the subject, and inform the COUNCIL, at their next meeting, of HIS MAJESTY'S pleasure.

On the following day, Wednesday, the President requested the Secretary to accompany him to Windsor. The Secretary, however, declined; and the President then ordered the book containing the minutes of the COUNCIL to be sent to his house in Newman Street, that he might carry it with him for HIS MAJESTY'S inspection. After these preparations were made, the President suddenly changed his mind and abandoned his intention of proceeding to Windsor. A meeting of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY was held on Thursday, and the resolutions of COUNCIL were expunged by the command of that body, and with the concurrence of the President, *without any reference to HIS MAJESTY*.

The COUNCIL met on the following day. The President informed the members that he was then ready to proceed to the business of the evening. He was asked whether he had consulted his MAJESTY'S pleasure relative to the resolutions of the 24th of May. An explanation ensued; and the members of the COUNCIL discovered, to their extreme surprise, that the resolutions were already expunged, and, as they were informed, by the command of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Mr. WEST had repeatedly promised to consult the KING, upon the subject, and was accordingly reproached with this extraordinary departure from a distinct and positive engagement. He replied that he had considered himself released from this engagement by the refusal of the COUNCIL to proceed to the other business of the meeting. His subsequent conduct, however—the preparations which he made for his journey to Windsor, and his application to the Secretary for the book containing the minutes of the COUNCIL, sufficiently shew that this excuse was a mere *after-thought*, and that some other circumstance, some *secret consultation*, which probably gave birth to the above violent measure, had induced him to change his purpose, and to recede from his engagement with the COUNCIL.

those who were not in the confidence of the party, it was proposed that the address should be accompanied. Here then it becomes necessary to interrupt the current of this relation. A just regard to decorum, and a proper sense of that respect which is due to the person and authority of the SOVEREIGN, render it expedient to draw a veil over this part of the proceedings of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. Most anxiously is it to be desired, that these resolutions, so unbecoming in their object, and so exceptionable from the language and spirit in which they were framed, should be consigned to perpetual oblivion. Already they have been expunged by HIS MAJESTY'S command from the books of the society. Happy would it be if they could, with the same facility, be obliterated from the recollection of those who either actively promoted, or *silently countenanced*, so indecent a measure *!

* These resolutions were introduced by Mr. FARINGTON. When they were first read in the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, several of the members thought it their duty to retire from the meeting. The resolutions were afterwards put separately to vote, and adopted by the party, *with the full concurrence and approbation of the President.*

Another extraordinary circumstance marked the proceedings of this memorable evening. These resolutions, for the contents of which the members of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY had thus rendered themselves responsible, were not delivered, in the usual form, to the Secretary; but Mr. FARINGTON was allowed, when they had been passed by the meeting, to take them from the Academy. The *original* never again appeared; but after some interval a *copy* was left with the Secretary, in order that it might be entered on the Journals. At a subsequent meeting

The President, accompanied in the usual form by the Treasurer and the Secretary, attended the KING at Windsor. The President* presented the address to HIS MAJESTY, and *tendered* the resolutions, in pursuance of the vote of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. After the interval of a few days, HIS MAJESTY was graciously pleased to transmit, by the hands of the Treasurer, a *second* order in writing, addressed to the Secretary. This final expression of the KING's pleasure contained, in substance—"that HIS MAJESTY, finding that the communication which he had made to the Royal Academy early in the preceding month, had not been clearly understood, had thought it necessary to convey his senti-

of COUNCIL, the Secretary was interrogated upon the subject; he replied, that Mr. FARINGTON had expressed a desire to *correct* the resolutions (resolutions which had already been adopted by the GENERAL ASSEMBLY !) before they should be inserted in the minutes of the meeting. The President attempted an apology; but being asked by Mr. SOANE whether he would *authenticate the copy* with his signature, he very *prudently and properly declined*.

* The President had been requested, by the members of the COUNCIL, to carry, upon this occasion, the records of the Academy to Windsor, for HIS MAJESTY's inspection. They were accordingly conveyed, by the Secretary, for this purpose, to the President's house. Mr. West, although he had promised, without hesitation, to comply with the request of the COUNCIL, was, for very obvious reasons, far from being desirous that HIS MAJESTY should see the books; and, after some little consultation with the Secretary, he thought it *prudent*, notwithstanding his express engagement upon the subject, to return them to Somerset Place.

timents in such a manner, as to prevent any misunderstanding in future.”

The order then proceeded to state (after declaring HIS MAJESTY’S pleasure relative to certain committees appointed by the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, the substance and application of which will appear in a subsequent part of this narrative,) “ that HIS MAJESTY thereby directed that the motion made by John Singleton Copley on the 24th of May last *, and seconded by Sir Francis Bourgeois, should be *re-entered* on the minutes of the COUNCIL of the Royal Academy, as a *further* mark of HIS MAJESTY’S disapprobation of the business of the COUNCIL being *interrupted by any other power* in the Academy † ; and that HIS MAJESTY, in order that his sentiments and determination, on these points, might be more clearly understood, directed that all the minutes, resolves, and other transactions of the GENERAL BODY, respecting the censure and suspension of John Singleton

* The resolution relative to the independence of the COUNCIL (vide p. 10.) which the GENERAL ASSEMBLY had expunged.

† After this order was received, and, notwithstanding the clear manifestation of HIS MAJESTY’S pleasure, the Secretary, apparently with the view of disguising, as far as possible, the intemperate proceedings of the party, *cut* from the records of the COUNCIL, those leaves that contained the obliterated resolutions of the 24th of May, together with the *marginal note* which had been entered by the authority of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Copley, James Wyatt, John Yenn, John Soane, and Sir Francis Bourgeois, should be *expunged from the recollection of the Royal Academy*—and that HIS MAJESTY further directed (as it was his wish to restore harmony, and to see it continue amongst the Academicians of the Royal Academy) that the *resolutions* of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, passed on the 1st day of December, (as presented to HIS MAJESTY with the address) *should be obliterated from the minutes of the meeting.*”

The King also ordered the Secretary of the Royal Academy to carry the above directions into effect, and to enter those, his royal commands, in the books of the COUNCIL of the Royal Academy.

Such then has been the result of these bold and unconstitutional attempts to reduce the COUNCIL to a state of dependence upon the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, or more properly, to a state of complete subjection to the arbitrary will of the prevailing party in that body. These attempts have been defeated by the vigilance and activity of the COUNCIL, supported by the prompt and gracious interposition of the KING. With respect to the law upon the subject, it has been distinctly and impartially stated. It is evidently too clear and precise to leave room for the least difference of opinion among candid and intel-

ligent men. It is impossible either that the President, or the party, under whose guidance and controul he has uniformly acted throughout the course of these proceedings, could have entertained any real doubt upon the subject in contest. Whatever may have been the language which they have thought it prudent to hold their true and genuine sentiments are sufficiently clear and evident. Their *anxiety* to resist that appeal to the SOVEREIGN which was proposed in COUNCIL by the resolutions of the 24th of May, and the violence of their proceedings upon that occasion, are sufficiently expressive of their conviction that HIS MAJESTY'S decision would be fatal to the accomplishment of their interested and mischievous projects.

The attention which the SOVEREIGN, amidst so many other important cares, has condescended to bestow upon this subject, will be felt and acknowledged with gratitude, by the nation. HIS MAJESTY, sensible of the importance of this establishment, because he had attentively observed its beneficial effects, upon the growth and progress of the arts, has been justly anxious that no unnecessary and wanton innovation should endanger the further extension of those advantages of which it has already been productive. The foundation of this liberal

school was among the first and favourite acts of his patriotic and benevolent reign. Previously to its establishment the imitative arts were scarcely known among us. In literature,—in the extensive and varied circle of the sciences, we had long stood upon a proud and commanding eminence. In the arts alone, England was confessedly inferior to the rival nations of Europe. Forty years have not yet elapsed since the *foundation of this institution*, and the British school has already risen to deserved distinction and celebrity. There was nothing then averse in the character and genius of the country—nothing in the frame and constitution of its government. Taste, industry, invention—all the requisites to excellence were liberally diffused among us. But the directing Spirit had slumbered for ages in a state of inertness and torpor. Aroused, at length, and invigorated by the influence of a generous and exalted patronage, she now unfolds her latent powers; and, quickened into active existence, has pointed out a new and liberal source of national wealth and distinction.

*Through the rude chaos, thus the running light
Shot the first ray, that pierc'd the native night.*

× × × ×

Having stated these leading facts and particulars in vindication of the character and conduct of the suspen-

ded members of the COUNCIL, it appears expedient, in order, if possible, more clearly to establish the propriety and urgent necessity of that appeal to the SOVEREIGN, which was proposed by the resolutions of the 24th of May, to relate, in a few words, the history and *previous* proceedings of this dangerous party ; which, after many indirect, but unsuccessful, attempts to accomplish its favourite object of policy, has been driven, by a too eager pursuit, to the above open and undisguised attack upon the laws and fundamental constitutions of the society. The avowed and active leader of the confederacy is MR. FARINGTON. The party was originally formed, and acquired considerable strength and influence, during the presidency of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Its first signal achievement was, an attack of the most violent and indecent nature upon that distinguished and truly respectable character. The mildness and refined sensibility of his disposition and temper, would not suffer him to incur the risk of a second affront ; and he accordingly retired from a situation, which, from the first establishment of the Academy, he had filled with so much honour to himself and so much advantage to the institution. The effect produced by this event, was instantaneous and powerful. Esteem and even veneration for the character of the President united, in his favour, all the moderate members of the society. They fortu-

nately outnumbered their opponents. An explanation ensued ; and it was resolved that a committee should be appointed to wait upon Sir Joshua to request, in the name of the society, that he would resume that situation to which he had been so repeatedly called by their unanimous suffrages, His previous determination yielded to this marked expression of esteem and attachment. He again accepted the chair, and every past subject of difference was prudently suffered to sink into oblivion. It was during these memorable proceedings, that Sir Joshua repeatedly observed, with every expression of sincere regret, that a party had begun to form itself in the Academy, which he was apprehensive might ultimately effect the ruin of the institution. The course of subsequent events has sufficiently evinced his sagacity and foresight ;—it has proved, that, even at this early period, he had formed a correct judgment of the character and views of those persons to whom this deliberate and pointed observation was so evidently intended to apply.

After the death of Sir Joshua Reynolds, the party gradually increased in numbers and improved in discipline. They controled every election ; and as the President was annually dependent for the continuance of his authority upon their votes, he was of course held in a

state of complete subjection. The unremitting activity and inflexible perseverance which they have displayed, during so many years, in the prosecution of their favourite policy, must excite the utmost astonishment, when the mind adverts to the nature of the object to which their ambition has been thus invariably directed.

Having obtained a decided ascendancy in the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, their next endeavour was to reduce the COUNCIL to a state of dependence. That body, which had been invested, by the constitution of the Academy, with independent authority, presented a formidable barrier to the accomplishment of their projects. The members of the council were NOT ELECTIVE. It was provided at the original establishment of the society, that "the seats in the COUNCIL should go by *succession* to all the academicians;—that four of the COUNCIL should go out by rotation every year, and that no member should re-occupy his seat till *all the rest of the Academicians had served.*" The evident policy of this law was to render the COUNCIL, which was entrusted with the exclusive direction and government of the Academy, as far as possible independent of any party which might happen to prevail in the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. In order then to reduce the COUNCIL to a state of uniform subordination to the will of the party, it became

necessary, as a preliminary step, to endeavour if possible to elude the operation of this wise and salutary law.

In the year 1800, it was Mr. TRESHAM's right, according to the established principle of rotation, to succeed to a seat in the COUNCIL.—MR. TRESHAM, however, had shewn himself uniformly adverse to the principles and views of the party.—They determined therefore to pass him over in the appointment, and to elect one of their own tried and steady adherents.—MR. TRESHAM, justly indignant at the affront, and sensible of the dangerous consequences of such a precedent, immediately appealed to the KING. HIS MAJESTY annulled the election, and directed that MR. TRESHAM should take his seat in the COUNCIL, in conformity with the established laws of the society. This prompt and decisive interposition, on the part of the SOVEREIGN, disconcerted the views and projects of the party. The bold and daring attempt, by which they expected at once to effect the accomplishment of their wishes, and to obtain as complete a sway in the COUNCIL as they already possessed in the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, was, happily for the interests of the society, completely frustrated.

Disappointed, but not discouraged, by this repulse, they were still far from abandoning their favourite pro-

ject. They found it necessary, however, to make their attack by more secret and indirect approaches—to adopt measures which, though slower in their progress, might be equally sure and decisive in their effect.

It had long been a favourite object of policy with the party to obtain the appointment of committees, from the **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**, for the purpose of transacting business which, properly, fell within the province of the **COUNCIL**. These committees were composed exclusively of their own friends and adherents ;—they assembled as often as they judged it expedient, and operated as a constant rallying point to maintain the influence and authority of the party during the intervals between the several meetings of the **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**. After the failure of their attempt to render the **COUNCIL** elective, the party appear to have directed their attention to this object with increased activity and zeal. It was easy to foresee the consequences which would result from the establishment and extension of this system—that the **COUNCIL** would sink into insignificance, and the government of the Academy be gradually transferred to these committees and ultimately centre with the predominating party in the **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**. Accordingly many of the independent members of the Academy exerted themselves,

with the utmost activity, in opposing an innovation so pregnant with mischief to the institution.

An event at length occurred which brought this controversy to a crisis. Several of the members in the last COUNCIL were favourable to the views of the party. The period, however, approached, in which they were to relinquish their seats, in conformity *with the established laws* of the institution. It was determined, however, to improve the interval. A motion was accordingly introduced, the object of which was, to recommend it to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY to appoint a committee, to take into consideration the propriety of increasing the salaries of the officers of the Academy, and to report upon this subject to the COUNCIL. The committee, upon this recommendation, was immediately appointed. It continued to sit for several weeks ; and a report was at length prepared. In the mean time the COUNCIL was changed. Four of the members of the new COUNCIL refused to receive the report; and, at the same time, entered on the journals a *protest*, concisely stating the reasons upon which their objections were founded. It is to this protest that HIS MAJESTY refers, in his second gracious communication*. HIS MAJESTY, upon this question, was pleased to direct “ in order to *shew his*

* Vide p. 29.

disapprobation of committees being appointed to transact any business which it is the duty of the COUNCIL to perform, that the *protest* delivered by John Singleton Copley, James Wyatt, John Yenn, and Sir Francis Bourgeois, *should remain on the minutes* of the COUNCIL of the Royal Academy."

The leaders of the party, defeated in this project, and successively foiled in all their intrigues, were at length driven beyond every bound of decency and moderation. The violence, however, of their subsequent proceedings, has, happily, proved fatal to the accomplishment of their wishes. An effectual barrier has been raised against future encroachments; and the constitution of the Academy confirmed, by a new sanction, is at length fixed upon a permanent and immoveable basis.

Such then have been the measures, such the policy and final objects of this active and formidable party. Such, on the other hand, has been the conduct of the suspended members of the COUNCIL, and such the motives and principles by which they have been animated. *Non enim est ulla defensio contra vim optanda ; sed nonnunquam est necessaria.* Confident in the justice of their cause, it was impossible that they could submit in silence to those imputations under which they have so

long and so undeservedly laboured. Attacked, calumniated, disgraced, they have anxiously looked forward to the time when they might be allowed to submit their vindication to the world. That period has at length arrived. It has been shewn, by a fair and dispassionate appeal to authentic documents, that their conduct, throughout the course of these proceedings, was legal, and orderly, and temperate ;—*it has been shewn that they could not have remained silent and inactive spectators of such repeated, and systematic attacks upon the fundamental constitutions of the society, without a manifest breach of trust, without violating the express letter of those engagements which they had deliberately and solemnly subscribed. HIS MAJESTY, the illustrious founder, the patron, the perpetual guardian of the institution, has been graciously pleased to express his approbation of their conduct.* Supported by this high and distinguished sanction, they submit their cause with confidence to the judgment of their country and the world.

APPENDIX.

FROM THE ABSTRACT

OF THE

INSTRUMENT OF INSTITUTION AND LAWS

OF THE

ROYAL ACADEMY.

THE society shall consist of forty members, who shall be called **ACADEMICIANS** of the Royal Academy.

PRESIDENT.

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

COUNCIL.

The seats in the Council shall go by *succession* to all the Academicians, except the Secretary, who shall always belong thereto; four of the Council shall go out by rotation every

year, and these shall not re-occupy their seats in the Council till all the rest of the Academicians have served.

The Council shall frame all new laws and regulations, but they shall have no force till ratified by the consent of the General Assembly, and the approbation of the KING.

All laws and regulations, which may from time to time be made by the Council, shall be confirmed at a subsequent meeting of the Council, before they are presented to the General Assembly of the Academicians, for their consent.

All sums of money which shall hereafter be received by the Treasurer, on account of the Royal Academy, shall be immediately paid by him into the hands of a banker, appointed by the Council.

The Council shall direct all purchases of stock in the funds, hereafter to be made, and the Treasurer shall not be at liberty to dispose of any sums of money remaining in his or the banker's hands, without the order and direction of Council.

The Council shall determine the Subjects for all the premiums to be given to the Students.

All the officers and servants of the Academy shall be subservient to the Council, which shall have power to reform all

abuses, to censure such as are deficient in their duty, and, with the consent of the general body, and the KING's permission first obtained for that purpose, to suspend, or entirely remove from their employments, such as shall be found guilty of any great offences.

A meeting of *Five* Members of the Council, including the President or his Deputy, shall be deemed a Quorum.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

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.

If at a General Assembly of the Academicians, *Five* Members object to any law, or regulation, made in the Council for the government of the Society, they shall deliver their objections in writing, signed with their respective names; which done, the law or regulation objected to shall be referred to the Council to be re-considered.

FUNDS OF THE ACADEMY.

All monies which now are, or may hereafter be agreed upon to be laid out in the purchase of stock in the public

funds, shall be vested in the names of the President, the Secretary, and Treasurer for the time being, and one other Member of the Royal Academy, to be chosen by the Council ; and the Council shall direct the Treasurer, or any other Trustee to receive the dividends as they become due ; the four Trustees shall accept all stock purchased by order of Council, by signing their names in the books at the Bank of England.

GENERAL REGULATIONS.

Though it may not be for the benefit of the institution absolutely to prohibit pluralities, yet they are as much as possible to be avoided ; that his MAJESTY'S gracious intention may be complied with, by dividing, as nearly as possible, the emoluments of the institution amongst all its Members.

If any member shall become obnoxious 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.

ARCHITECTURE.

There shall be a Professor of Architecture, *who shall read annually six public lectures* in the Royal Academy, calculated to form the taste of the Students ; to instruct them in the laws and principles of composition ; to point out to them the

beauties or faults of celebrated productions ; to fit them for an unprejudiced study of books on the Art, and for a critical examination of structures : his salary shall be fifty pounds a year, and he shall continue in office during the KING's pleasure.

EXHIBITION.

There shall be an annual Exhibition of Paintings, Sculptures, and Designs, in which all Artists of distinguished merit shall be permitted to exhibit their works ; it shall continue open to the public six weeks, or longer, *at the discretion of the Council*, and be under the regulations expressed in the by-laws of the Society.



P. S. As it is the sincere and anxious wish of the parties to this publication, that every fact which it contains should be fairly and impartially stated, it has been thought proper to subjoin a few words, in further explanation of a material circumstance mentioned in one of the preceding pages, (vide page 27, note.) After the *corrected copy* of MR. FARINGTON's resolutions had been received by the Secretary, and entered upon the records of the Academy, and after this *strange irregularity* had been made a subject of enquiry in

the COUNCIL, MR. FARINGTON, at a subsequent meeting of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, produced, from his pocket, a paper, containing, as he said, the original resolutions which had been voted by the GENERAL ASSEMBLY on the same evening with the address. It is to be observed, however, that this paper was immediately afterwards returned, by MR. FARINGTON, into his own pocket; and was neither delivered to the Secretary, nor left to be deposited among the official documents of the Academy.

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J. WHITING, PRINTER, FINSBURY PLACE.