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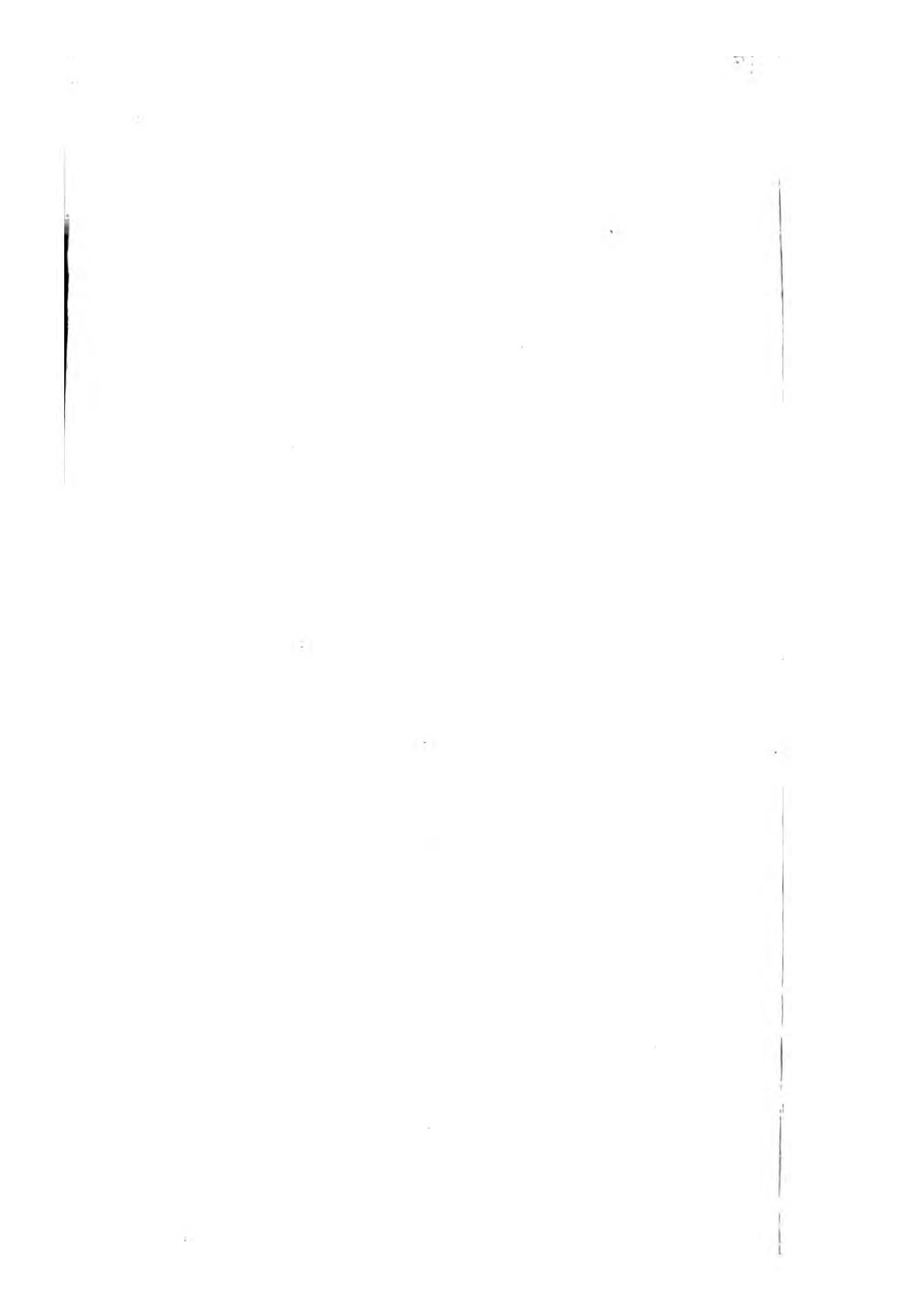
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BEING THE ARTICLES UNDER THOSE HEADS CONTRIBUTED TO

THE SEVENTH EDITION OF THE

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THE FINE ARTS,

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT.





## FINE ARTS.

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ART is defined by Lord Bacon as a proper disposal of the things of nature by human thought and experience, so as to answer the several purposes of mankind; in which sense *art* stands opposed to *nature*.

Art is principally used for a system of rules serving to facilitate the performance of certain actions; in which sense it stands opposed to *science*, or a system of speculative principles.

Arts are commonly divided into useful or mechanic, fine or liberal. The former are those wherein the hand and body are more concerned than the mind; of which kind are most of those which furnish us with the necessaries of life, and are popularly known by the name of trades. The latter are such as depend more on the labour of the mind than of the hand; they are the produce of imagination and taste, and their end is pleasure.

Some useful arts must be nearly coeval with the human race; for food, clothing, and habitation, even in their original simplicity, require some art. Many other arts are of such antiquity as to place the inventors beyond the reach of tradition. Several have gradually crept into the world without an inventor. The busy mind, however, accustomed to a beginning in things, cannot rest till it finds



or imagines a beginning to every art. The most probable conjectures of this nature the reader may see in the historical introductions to the different articles. Lord Kames, in his *Sketches of the History of Man*, has given some curious illustrations of the progress of the arts.

In all countries where the people are barbarous and illiterate, the progress of arts is extremely slow. It is vouched by an old French poem, that the virtues of the loadstone were known in France before the year 1180. The mariner's compass was exhibited at Venice anno 1260, by Paulus Venetus, as his own invention. John Goya of Amalfi was the first who, many years afterwards, used it in navigation, and also passed for being the inventor. Though it was used in China for navigation long before it was known in Europe, yet to this day it is not so perfect as in Europe. Instead of suspending it in order to make it act freely, it is placed upon a bed of sand, in which position every motion of the ship disturbs its operation. Handmills, termed *querns*, were early used for grinding corn; and when corn came to be raised in greater quantity, horse-mills succeeded. Water-mills for grinding corn are described by Vitruvius. Wind-mills were known in Greece and in Arabia as early as the seventh century, and yet no mention is made of them in Italy till the fourteenth. That they were not known in England till the reign of Henry VIII. appears from a household book of an earl of Northumberland, contemporary with that king, stating an allowance for three mill horses, "two to draw in the mill, and one to carry stuff to and from the mill." Water-mills for corn must in England have been of a later date. The ancients had mirror-glasses, and employed glass to imitate crystal vases and goblets; yet they never thought

of using it in windows. In the thirteenth century the Venetians were the only people who had the art of making crystal glass for mirrors. A clock that strikes the hours was unknown in Europe till the end of the twelfth century; and hence the custom of employing men to proclaim the hours during night. Galileo was the first who conceived an idea that a pendulum might be used for measuring time; and Huygens was the first who put the idea in execution, by making a pendulum clock. Hooke, in the year 1660, invented a spiral spring for a watch, though a watch was far from being a new invention. Paper was made no earlier than the fourteenth century; and the invention of printing was a century later. Silk manufactures were long established in Greece before silk-worms were introduced there. The manufacturers were provided with raw silk from Persia; but that commerce being frequently interrupted by war, two monks, in the reign of Justinian, brought eggs of the silk-work from Hindostan, and taught their countrymen the method of managing them. The art of reading made a very slow progress: to encourage that art in England, the capital punishment for murder was remitted if the criminal could but read, which in law language is termed *benefit of clergy*. One would imagine that the arts must have made a very rapid progress when so greatly favoured: but there is a signal proof of the contrary; for so small an edition of the Bible as 600 copies, translated into English in the reign of Henry VIII., was not wholly sold off in three years.

The discoveries of the Portuguese on the west coast of Africa is a remarkable instance of the slow progress of arts. In the beginning of the fifteenth century they were totally ignorant of that coast beyond Cape Non, 28 de-

grees north latitude. In 1410 the celebrated Prince Henry of Portugal fitted out a fleet for discoveries, which proceeded along the coast to Cape Bajadore, in 28 degrees, but had not courage to double it. In 1418 Tristan Vaz discovered the island Porto Santo ; and the year after the island Madeira was discovered. In 1439 a Portuguese captain doubled Cape Bajadore ; and the next year the Portuguese reached Cape Blanco, lat. 20 degrees. In 1446 Nuna Tristan doubled Cape de Verde, lat. 14. 40. In 1448 Don Gonzalo Vallo took possession of the Azores. In 1449 the Islands of Cape de Verde were discovered for Don Henry. In 1471 Pedro d'Escovar discovered the island St. Thomas and Prince's Island. In 1484 Diego Cam discovered the kingdom of Congo. In 1486 Bartholomew Diaz, employed by John II. of Portugal, doubled the Cape of Good Hope, which he called *Cabo Tormentoso*, from the tempestuous weather he found in the passage.

The progress of art seldom fails to be rapid when a people happen to be roused out of a torpid state by some fortunate change of circumstances. Prosperity, contrasted with former abasement, gives to the mind a spring, which is vigorously exerted in every new pursuit. The Athenians made but a mean figure under the tyranny of Pisistratus, but upon regaining freedom and independence they were converted into heroes. Miletus, a Greek city of Ionia, being destroyed by the king of Persia, and the inhabitants made slaves, the Athenians, deeply affected with the misery of their brethren, boldly attacked the king in his own dominions, and burnt the city of Sardis. In less than ten years after, they gained a signal victory at Marathon ; and under Themistocles, made head against that prodigious army with which Xerxes threatened utter

ruin to Greece. Such prosperity produced its usual effects : arts flourished with arms, and Athens became the chief theatre for sciences, as well as for fine arts. The reign of Augustus Cæsar, which put an end to the rancour of civil war, and restored peace to Rome, with the comforts of society, proved an auspicious era for literature, and produced a cloud of Latin historians, poets, and philosophers, to whom the moderns are indebted for their taste and talents. One who makes a figure rouses emulation in all ; one catches fire from another, and the national spirit is every where triumphant ; classical works are composed, and useful discoveries made in every art and science. With regard to Rome, it is true that the Roman government under Augustus was in effect despotic ; but despotism in that single instance made no obstruction to literature, it having been the policy of that reign to hide power as much as possible. A similar revolution happened in Tuscany about three centuries ago. That country having been divided into a number of small republics, the people, excited by mutual hatred between small nations in close neighbourhood, became ferocious and bloody, flaming with revenge for the slightest offence. These republics being united under the great duke of Tuscany, enjoyed the sweets of peace in a mild government. That comfortable revolution, which made the deeper impression by a retrospect of recent calamities, roused the national spirit, and produced ardent application to arts and literature. The restoration of the royal family in England, which put an end to a cruel and envenomed civil war, promoted improvements of every kind ; arts and industry made a rapid progress among the people, though left to themselves by a weak and fluctuating administration. Had the nation, upon that favourable turn

of fortune, been blessed with a succession of able and virtuous princes, to what a height might not arts and sciences have been carried!

Another cause of activity and animation is the being engaged in some important action of doubtful issue,—a struggle for liberty, the resisting a potent invader, or the like. Greece, divided into small states frequently at war with each other, advanced literature and the fine arts to unrivalled perfection. The Corsicans, while engaged in a perilous war for defence of their liberties, exerted a vigorous national spirit; they founded a university for arts and sciences, a public library, and a public bank. After a long stupor during the dark ages of Christianity, arts and literature revived among the turbulent states of Italy. The Royal Society in London, and the Academy of Sciences in Paris, were both of them instituted after civil wars that had animated the people and roused their activity.

In a country thinly peopled, where even necessary arts want hands, it is common to see one person exercising more arts than one. In every populous country, even simple arts are split into parts, and each part has an artist appropriated to it. In the large towns of ancient Egypt a physician was confined to a single disease. In mechanic arts that method is excellent. As a hand confined to a single operation, becomes both expert and expeditious, a mechanic art is perfected by having its different operations distributed among the greatest number of hands: many hands are employed in making a watch and a still greater number in manufacturing a web of woollen cloth. Various arts or operations carried on by the same man invigorate his mind, because they exercise different faculties; and as he cannot be equally expert in every art



or operation, he is frequently reduced to supply want of skill by thought and invention. Constant application, on the contrary, to a single operation, confines the mind to a single object, and excludes all thought and invention. In such a train of life the operator becomes dull and stupid, like a beast of burden. The difference is visible in the manners of the people. In a country where, from want of hands, several occupations must be carried on by the same person, the people are knowing and conversable: in a populous country, where manufactures flourish, they are ignorant and unsociable. The same effect is equally visible in countries where an art or manufacture is confined to a certain class of men. It is visible in Hindostan, where the people are divided into castes, which never mix even by marriage, and where every man follows his father's trade. The Dutch lint-boors are a similar instance: the same family carries on the trade from generation to generation, and are accordingly ignorant and brutish even beyond other Dutch peasants.

Useful arts pave the way to fine arts. Men upon whom the former had bestowed every convenience, turned their thoughts to the latter. Beauty was studied in objects of sight, and men of taste attached themselves to the fine arts, which multiplied their enjoyments, and improved their benevolence. Sculpture and painting made an early figure in Greece, which afforded plenty of beautiful originals to be copied in these imitative arts. Statuary, a more simple imitation than painting, was sooner brought to perfection. The statue of Jupiter by Phidias, and of Juno by Polycletes, though the admiration of all the world, were executed long before the art of light and shade was known. Apollodorus, and Zeuxis his disciple,

who flourished in the 95th olympiad, were the first who figured in that art. Another cause concurred to advance statuary before painting in Greece, viz. a great demand for statues of their gods. Architecture, as a fine art, made a slower progress. Proportions, upon which its elegance chiefly depends, cannot be accurately ascertained, but by an infinity of trials in great buildings. A model cannot be relied on ; for a large and a small building, even of the same form, require different proportions.

The term Fine Arts may be viewed as embracing all those arts in which the powers of imitation or invention are exerted, chiefly with a view to the production of pleasure by the immediate impression which they make on the mind. But the phrase has of late, we think, been restricted to a narrower and more technical signification ; namely, to painting, sculpture, engraving, and architecture, which appeal to the eye as the medium of pleasure ; and, by way of eminence, to the two first of these arts. In the following observations we shall adopt this limited sense of the term ; and shall endeavour to develop the principles upon which the great masters have proceeded, and also to inquire, in a more particular manner, into the state and probable advancement of these arts in this country.

The great works of art at present extant, and which may be regarded as models of perfection in their several kinds, are the Greek statues—the pictures of the celebrated Italian masters—those of the Dutch and Flemish schools—to which we may add the comic productions of our own countryman Hogarth. These all stand unrivalled in the history of art ; and they owe their pre-emi-

nence and perfection to one and the same principle,—*the immediate imitation of nature*. This principle predominated equally in the classical forms of the antique and in the grotesque figures of Hogarth: the perfection of art in each arose from the truth and identity of the imitation with the reality; the difference was in the subjects—there was none in the mode of imitation. Yet the advocates for the *ideal system of art* would persuade their disciples, that the difference between Hogarth and the antique does not consist in the different forms of nature which they imitated, but in this, that the one is like and the other unlike nature. This is an error the most detrimental perhaps of all others, both to the theory and practice of art. As, however, the prejudice is very strong and general, and supported by the highest authority, it will be necessary to go somewhat elaborately into the question in order to produce an impression on the other side.

What has given rise to the common notion of the *ideal*, as something quite distinct from *actual* nature, is probably the perfection of the Greek statues. Not seeing among ourselves any thing to correspond in beauty and grandeur, either with the features or form of the limbs in these exquisite remains of antiquity, it was an obvious, but a superficial conclusion, that they must have been created from the idea existing in the artist's mind, and could not have been copied from any thing existing in nature. The contrary, however, is the fact. The general form, both of the face and figure, which we observe in the old statues, is not an ideal abstraction, is not a fanciful invention of the sculptor, but is as completely local and national (though it happens to be more beautiful) as the figures on a Chinese screen, or a copperplate en-

graving of a negro chieftain in a book of travels. It will not be denied that there is a difference of physiognomy as well as of complexion in different races of men. The Greek form appears to have been naturally beautiful, and they had, besides, every advantage of climate, of dress, of exercise, and modes of life to improve it. The artist had also every facility afforded him in the study and knowledge of the human form; and their religious and public institutions gave him every encouragement in the prosecution of this art. All these causes contributed to the perfection of these noble productions; but we should be inclined principally to attribute the superior symmetry of form common to the Greek statues, in the first place, to the superior symmetry of the models in nature; and in the second, to the more constant opportunities for studying them. If we allow, also, for the superior genius of the people, we shall not be wrong; but this superiority consisted in their peculiar susceptibility to the impressions of what is beautiful and grand in nature. It may be thought an objection to what has just been said, that the antique figures of animals, &c., are as fine, and proceed on the same principles, as their statues of gods or men. But all that follows from this seems to be, that their art had been perfected in the study of the human form, the test and proof of power and skill; and was then transferred easily to the general imitation of all other objects, according to their true characters, proportions, and appearances. As a confirmation of these remarks, the antique portraits of individuals were often superior even to the personifications of their gods. We think that no unprejudiced spectator of real taste can hesitate for a moment in preferring the head of the Antinous, for example, to

that of the Apollo. And in general it may be laid down as a rule, that the most perfect of the antiques are the most simple,—those which affect the least action, or violence of passion,—which repose the most on natural beauty of form, and a certain expression of sweetness and dignity, that is, which remain most nearly in that state in which they could be copied from nature without straining the limbs or features of the individual, or racking the invention of the artist. This tendency of Greek art to repose has indeed been reproached with insipidity by those who had not a true feeling of beauty and sentiment. We, however, prefer these models of habitual grace or internal grandeur to the violent distortions of suffering in the Laocoon, or even to the supercilious air of the Apollo. The Niobe, more than any other antique head, combines truth and beauty with deep passion. But here the passion is fixed, intense, habitual ;—it is not a sudden or violent gesticulation, but a settled mould of features ; the grief it expresses is such as might almost turn the human countenance itself *into marble* !

In general, then, we would be understood to maintain, that the beauty and grandeur so much admired in the Greek statues were not a voluntary fiction of the brain of the artist, but existed substantially in the forms from which they were copied, and by which the artist was surrounded. A striking authority in support of these observations, which has in some measure been lately discovered, is to be found in the *Elgin marbles*, taken from the Acropolis at Athens, and supposed to be the works of the celebrated Phidias. The process of fastidious refinement and indefinite abstraction is certainly not visible there.

The figures have all the ease, the simplicity, and variety,



of individual nature. Even the details of the subordinate parts, the loose hanging folds in the skin, the veins under the belly or on the sides of the horses, more or less swelled, as the animal is more or less in action, are given with scrupulous exactness. This is true nature and true art. In a word, these invaluable remains of antiquity are precisely like casts taken from life. The *ideal* is not the preference of that which exists only in the mind to that which exists in nature ; but the preference of that which is fine in nature to that which is less so. There is nothing fine in art but what is taken almost immediately, and as it were, in the mass, from what is finer in nature. Where there have been the finest models in nature, there have been the finest works of art.

As the Greek statues were copied from Greek forms, so Raffaelle's expressions were taken from Italian faces ; and we have heard it remarked, that the women in the streets at Rome seem to have walked out of his pictures in the Vatican.

Sir Joshua Reynolds constantly refers to Raffaelle as the highest example in modern times (at least with one exception) of the grand or ideal style ; and yet he makes the essence of that style to consist in the embodying of an abstract or general idea, formed in the mind of the artist by rejecting the peculiarities of individuals, and retaining only what is common to the species. Nothing can be more inconsistent than the style of Raffaelle with this definition. In his Cartoons, and in his groupes in the Vatican, there is hardly a face or figure which is any thing more than fine individual nature finely disposed and copied. The late Mr. Barry, who could not be suspected of prejudice on this side of the question, speaks thus of them : " In

Raffaelle's pictures (at the Vatican) of the *Dispute of the Sacrament*, and the *School of Athens*, one sees all the heads to be entirely copied from particular characters in nature, nearly proper for the persons and situations which he adapts them to ; and he seems to me only to add and take away what may answer his purpose in little parts, features, &c ; conceiving, while he had the head before him, ideal characters and expressions, which he adapts these features and peculiarities of face to. This attention to the particulars which distinguish all the different faces, persons, and characters, the one from the other, gives his pictures quite the verity and unaffected dignity of nature, which stamp the distinguishing differences betwixt one man's face and body, and another's."

If any thing is wanting to the conclusiveness of this testimony, it is only to look at the pictures themselves ; particularly the *Miracle of the Conversion*, and the *Assembly of Saints*, which are little else than a collection of divine portraits, in natural and expressive attitudes, full of the loftiest thought and feeling, and as varied as they are fine. It is this reliance on the power of nature which has produced those masterpieces by the prince of painters, in which expression is all in all ;—where one spirit—that of truth—pervades every part, brings down heaven to earth, mingles cardinals and popes with angels and apostles,—and yet blends and harmonizes the whole by the true touches and intense feeling of what is beautiful and grand in nature. It is no wonder that Sir Joshua, when he first saw Raffaelle's pictures in the Vatican, was at a loss to discover any great excellence in them, if he was looking out for his theory of the *ideal*,—of neutral character and middle forms.

There is more an appearance of abstract grandeur of



form in Michel Angelo. He has followed up, has enforced, and expanded, as it were, a preconceived idea, till he sometimes seems to tread on the verge of caricature. His forms, however, are not *middle*, but *extreme* forms, massy, gigantic, supernatural. They convey the idea of the greatest size and strength in the figure, and in all the parts of the figure. Every muscle is swollen and turgid. This tendency to exaggeration would have been avoided if Michel Angelo had recurred more constantly to nature, and had proceeded less on a scientific knowledge of the structure of the human body ; for science gives only the positive form of the different parts, which the imagination may afterwards magnify as it pleases ; but it is nature alone which combines them with perfect truth and delicacy, in all the varieties of motion and expression. It is fortunate that we can refer, in illustration of our doctrine, to the admirable fragment of the Theseus at Lord Elgin's, which shows the possibility of uniting the grand and natural style in the highest degree. The form of the limbs, as affected by pressure or action, and the general sway of the body, are preserved with the most consummate mastery. We should prefer this statue as a model for forming the style of the student to the Apollo, which strikes us as having something of a theatrical appearance ; or to the Hercules, in which there is an ostentatious and over-laboured display of anatomy. This last figure is so overloaded with sinews, that it has been suggested as a doubt, whether, if life could be put into it, it would be able to move. Grandeur of conception, truth of nature, and purity of taste, seem to have been at their height when the masterpieces which adorned the temple of Minerva at Athens, of which we have only these imperfect fragments, were produced. Compared with

these, the later Greek statues display a more elaborate workmanship, more of the artifices of style. The several parts are more uniformly balanced, made more to tally like modern periods ; each muscle is more equally brought out, and more highly finished as a part, but not with the same subordination of each part to the whole. If some of these wonderful productions have a fault, it is the want of that entire and naked simplicity which pervades the whole of the *Elgin marbles*.

Having spoken here of the Greek statues, and of the works of Raffaello and Michel Angelo, as far as relates to the imitation of nature, we shall attempt to point out, to the best of our ability, and as concisely as possible, what we conceive to be their general and characteristic excellences. The ancients excelled in beauty of form ; Michel Angelo in grandeur of conception ; Raffaello in expression. In Raffaello's faces, particularly his women, the expression is very superior to the form ; in the ancient statues the form is the principal thing. The interest which the latter excite is in a manner external ; it depends on a certain grace and lightness of appearance, joined with exquisite symmetry and refined susceptibility to voluptuous emotions ; but there is in general a want of pathos. In their looks we do not read the workings of the heart ; by their beauty they seem raised above the sufferings of humanity ; by their beauty they are deified. The pathos which they exhibit is rather that of present and physical distress, than of deep internal sentiment. What has been remarked of Leonardo da Vinci, is also true of Raffaello, that there is an angelic sweetness and tenderness in his faces, in which human frailty and passion are purified by

the sanctity of religion. The ancient statues are finer objects for the eye to contemplate ; they represent a more perfect race of physical beings, but we have little sympathy with them. In Raffaele, all our natural sensibilities are heightened and refined by the sentiments of faith and hope, pointing mysteriously to the interests of another world. The same intensity of passion appears also to distinguish Raffaele from Michel Angelo. Michel Angelo's forms are grander, but they are not so informed with expression. Raffaele's, however ordinary in themselves, are full of expression, " even to overflowing ;" every nerve and muscle is impregnated with feeling,—bursting with meaning. In Michel Angelo, on the contrary, the powers of body and mind appear superior to any events that can happen to them ; the capacity of thought and feeling is never full, never strained or tasked to the extremity of what it will bear. All is in a lofty repose and solitary grandeur, which no human interest can shake or disturb. It has been said that Michel Angelo painted *man*, and Raffaele *men* ; that the one was an epic, the other a dramatic painter. But the distinction we have stated is, perhaps, truer and more intelligible, viz. that the one gave greater dignity of form, and the other greater force and refinement of expression. Michel Angelo, in fact, borrowed his style from sculpture. He represented, in general, only single figures (with subordinate accompaniments), and had not to express the conflicting actions and passions of a multitude of persons. It is therefore a mere truism to say that his compositions are not dramatic. He is much more picturesque than Raffaele. The whole figure of his *Jeremiah* droops and hangs down like a ma-

jestic tree surcharged with showers. His drawing of the human form has the characteristic freedom and boldness of Titian's landscapes.

After Michel Angelo and Raffaele, there is no doubt that Leonardo da Vinci and Correggio are the two painters, in modern times, who have carried historical expression to the highest ideal perfection ; and yet it is equally certain that their heads are carefully copied from faces and expressions in nature. Leonardo excelled principally in his women and children. We find, in his female heads, a peculiar charm of expression ; a character of natural sweetness and tender playfulness, mixed up with the pride of conscious intellect and the graceful reserve of personal dignity. He blends purity with voluptuousness ; and the expression of his women is equally characteristic of " the mistress or the saint." His pictures are worked up to the height of the idea he had conceived, with an elaborate felicity ; but this idea was evidently first suggested, and afterwards religiously compared with nature. This was his excellence. His fault is, that his style of execution is too mathematical ; that is, his pencil does not follow the graceful variety of the details of objects, but substitutes certain refined gradations, both of form and colour, producing equal changes in equal distances, with a mechanical uniformity. Leonardo was a man of profound learning as well as genius, and perhaps transferred too much of the formality of science to his favourite art.

The masterpieces of Correggio have the same identity with nature, the same stamp of truth. He has indeed given to his pictures the utmost softness and refinement of outline and expression ; but this idea, at which he constantly aimed, is filled up with all the details and varieties

which such heads would have in nature. So far from any thing like a naked abstract idea, or middle form, the *individuality* of his faces has something peculiar in it, even approaching the grotesque. He has endeavoured to impress habitually on the countenance those undulating outlines which rapture or tenderness leave there, and has chosen for this purpose those forms and proportions which most obviously assisted his design.

As to the colouring of Correggio, it is nature itself. Not only is the general tone perfectly true, but every speck and particle is varied in colour, in relief, in texture, with a care, a felicity, and an effect, which is almost magical. His light and shade are equally admirable. No one else, perhaps, ever gave the same harmony and roundness to his compositions. So true are his shadows,—equally free from coldness, opacity, or false glare;—so clear, so broken, so airy, and yet so deep, that if you hold your hand so as to cast a shadow on any part of the flesh which is in the light, this part, so shaded, will present exactly the same appearance which the painter has given to the shadowed part of the picture. Correggio, indeed, possessed a greater variety of excellencies in the different departments of his art than any other painter; and yet it is remarkable, that the impression which his pictures leave upon the mind of the common spectator is monotonous and comparatively feeble. His style is in some degree mannered and confined. For instance, he is without the force, passion, and grandeur of Raffaello, who, however, possessed his softness of expression, but of expression only; and in colour, in light and shade, and other qualities, was quite inferior to Correggio. We may, perhaps, solve this apparent contradiction by saying, that he applied the power of his mind



to a greater variety of objects than others ; but that this power was still of the same character ; consisting in a certain exquisite sense of the harmonious, the soft and graceful in form, colour, and sentiment, but with a deficiency of strength, and a tendency to effeminacy in all these.

After the names of Raffaello and Correggio, we shall mention that of Guido, whose female faces are exceedingly beautiful and ideal, but altogether commonplace and vapid compared with those of Raffaello or Correggio ; and they are so for no other reason but that the general idea they convey is not enriched and strengthened by an intense contemplation of nature. For the same reason, we can conceive nothing more unlike the antique than the figures of Nicholas Poussin, except as to the preservation of the costume ; and it is perhaps chiefly owing to the habit of studying his art at second-hand, or by means of scientific rules, that the great merits of that able painter, whose understanding and genius are unquestionable, are confined to his choice of subjects for his pictures, and his manner of telling the story. His landscapes, which he probably took from nature, are superior as paintings to his historical pieces. The faces of Poussin want natural expression, as his figures want grace ; but the back-grounds of his historical compositions can scarcely be surpassed. In his *Plague of Athens*, the very buildings seem stiff with horror. His giants, seated on the top of their fabled mountains, and playing on their Pan pipes, are as familiar and natural as if they were the ordinary inhabitants of the scene. The finest of his landscapes is his picture of the *Deluge*. The sun is just seen, wan and drooping in his course. The sky is bowed down with a weight of waters, and heaven and earth seem mingling together.

Titian is at the head of the Venetian school. He is the first of all colourists. In delicacy and purity Correggio is equal to him, but his colouring has not the same warmth and gusto in it. Titian's flesh-colour partakes of the glowing nature of the climate, and of the luxuriousness of the manners of his country. He represents objects not through a merely lucid medium, but as if tinged with a golden light. Yet it is wonderful in how low a tone of local colouring his pictures are painted,—how rigidly his means are husbanded. His most gorgeous effects are produced, not less by keeping down than by heightening his colours; the fineness of his gradations adds to their variety and force; and, with him, truth is the same thing as splendour. Every thing is done by the severity of his eye, by the patience of his touch. He is enabled to keep pace with nature by never hurrying on before her; and as he forms the broadest masses out of innumerable varying parts and minute strokes of the pencil, so he unites and harmonizes the strongest contrasts by the most imperceptible transitions. Every distinction is relieved and broken by some other intermediate distinction, like half-notes in music; and yet all this accumulation of endless variety is so managed as only to produce the majestic simplicity of nature, so that to a common eye there is nothing extraordinary in his pictures, any more than in nature itself. It is, we believe, owing to what has been here stated, that Titian is, of all painters, at once the easiest and the most difficult to copy. He is the most difficult to copy perfectly, for the artifice of his colouring and execution is hid in its apparent simplicity; and yet the knowledge of nature, and the arrangement of the forms and masses in his pictures, are so masterly, that any



copy made from them, even the rudest outline or sketch, can hardly fail to have a look of high art. Because he was the greatest colourist in the world, this, which was his most prominent, has, for shortness, been considered as his only excellence ; and he has been said to have been ignorant of drawing. What he was, generally speaking, deficient in, was invention or composition, though even this appears to have been more from habit than want of power ; but his drawing of actual forms, where they were not to be put into momentary action, or adapted to a particular expression, was as fine as possible. His drawing of the forms of inanimate objects is unrivalled. His trees have a marked character of physiognomy of their own, and exhibit an appearance of strength or flexibility, solidity or lightness, as if they were endued with conscious power and purposes. Character was another excellence which Titian possessed in the highest degree. It is scarcely speaking too highly of his portraits to say, that they have as much expression, that is, convey as fine an idea of intellect and feeling, as the historical heads of Raffaele. The chief difference appears to be, that the expression in Raffaele is more imaginary and contemplative, and in Titian more personal and constitutional. The heads of the one seem thinking more of some event or subject, those of the other to be thinking more of themselves. In the portraits of Titian, as might be expected, the Italian character always predominates ; there is a look of piercing sagacity, of commanding intellect, of acute sensibility, which it would be in vain to seek for in any other portraits. The daring spirit and irritable passions of the age and country are distinctly stamped upon their countenances, and can be as little mistaken as the

costume which they wear. The portraits of Raffaele, though full of profound thought and feeling, have more of common humanity about them. Titian's portraits are the most historical that ever were painted; and they are so for this reason, that they have most consistency of form and expression. His portraits of Hippolito de Medici, and of a young Neapolitan nobleman, lately in the gallery of the Louvre, are a striking contrast in this respect. All the lines of the face in the one, the eye-brows, the nose, the corners of the mouth, the contour of the face, present the same sharp angles, the same acute, edgy, contracted, violent expression. The other portrait has the finest expansion of feature and outline, and conveys the most exquisite idea possible of mild, thoughtful sentiment. The consistency of the expression constitutes as great a charm in Titian's portraits as the harmony of the colouring. The similarity sometimes objected to his heads is partly national, and partly arises from the class of persons whom he painted. He painted only Italians; and in his time it rarely happened that any but persons of the highest rank, senators or cardinals, sat for their pictures. The similarity of costume of the dress, the beard, &c. also adds to the similarity of their appearance. It adds at the same time to their picturesque effect; and the alteration in this respect is one circumstance among others that has been injurious, not to say fatal, to modern art. This observation is not confined to portrait; for the hired dresses with which our historical painters clothe their figures, sit no more easily on the imagination of the artist, than they do gracefully on the lay-figures over which they are thrown.

Giorgioni, Paul Veronese, Tintoret, and the Bassans, are the remaining great names of the Venetian school. The

excellence of all of them consisted in their bold, masterly, and striking imitation of nature. Their want of *ideal form* and elevated character is, indeed, a constant subject of reproach against them. Giorgioni takes the first place among them; for he was in some measure the master of Titian, whereas the others were only his disciples. The Carraccis, Domenichino, and the rest of the Bolognese school, formed themselves on a principle of combining the excellences of the Roman and Venetian painters, in which they for a while succeeded to a considerable degree; but they degenerated and dwindled away into absolute insignificance, in proportion as they departed from nature, or the great masters who had copied her, to mould their works on academic rules, and the phantoms of abstract perfection.

Rubens is the prince of the Flemish painters. Of all the great painters, he is perhaps the most artificial,—the one who painted most from his own imagination,—and, what was almost the inevitable consequence, the most of a mannerist. He had neither the Greek forms to study from, nor the Roman expression, nor the high character, picturesque costume, and sun-burnt hues which the Venetian painters had immediately before them. He took, however, what circumstances presented to him,—a fresher and more blooming tone of complexion, arising from moister air and a colder climate. To this he added the congenial splendour of reflected lights and shadows cast from rich drapery; and he made what amends he could for the want of expression, by the richness of his compositions, and the fantastic variety of his allegorical groups. Both his colouring and his drawing, were, however, ideal exaggerations. But both had particular qualities of the highest value. He has given to his flesh greater transpa-

rency and freshness than any other painter ; and this excellence he had from nature. One of the finest instances will be found in his *Peasant Family going to Market*, in which the figures have all the bloom of health upon their countenances ; and the very air of the surrounding landscape strikes sharp and wholesome on the sense. Rubens had another excellence ; he has given all that relates to the expression of motion in his allegorical figures, in his children, his animals, even in his trees, to a degree which no one else has equalled, or indeed approached. His drawing is often deficient in proportion, in knowledge, and in elegance, but it is always picturesque. The drawing of N. Poussin, on the contrary, which has been much cried up, is merely learned and anatomical : he has a knowledge of the structure and measurements of the human body, but very little feeling of the grand or beautiful, or striking in form. All Rubens' forms have ease, freedom, and excessive elasticity. In the grotesque style of history,—as in the groups of satyrs, nymphs, bacchanals, and animals, where striking contrasts of form are combined with every kind of rapid and irregular movement,—he has not a rival. Witness his Silenus at Blenheim, where the lines seem drunk and staggering ; and his procession of Cupids riding on animals at Whitehall, with that adventurous leader of the infantine crew, who, with a spear, is urging a lion, on which he is mounted, over the edge of the world ; for beyond we only see a precipice of clouds and sky. Rubens' power of expressing motion perhaps arose from the facility of his pencil, and his habitually trusting a good deal to memory and imagination in his compositions ; for this quality can be given in no other way. His portraits are the least valuable productions of his pen-

cil. His landscapes are often delightful, and appear like the work of fairy hands.

It remains to speak of Vandyke and Rembrandt, the one the disciple of Rubens, the other the entire founder of his own school. It is not possible for two painters to be more opposite. The characteristic merits of the former are very happily summed up in a single line of a poetical critic, where he speaks of

The soft precision of the clear Vandyke.

The general object of this analysis of the works of the great masters has been to show that their pre-eminence has constantly depended, not on the creation of a fantastic, abstract excellence, existing nowhere but in their own minds, but in their selecting and embodying some one view of nature, which came immediately under their habitual observation, and which their particular genius led them to study and imitate with success. This is certainly the case with Vandyke. His portraits, mostly of English women, in the collection in the Louvre, have a cool refreshing air about them, a look of simplicity and modesty even in the very tone, which forms a fine contrast to the voluptuous glow and mellow golden lustre of Titian's Italian women. There is a quality of flesh-colour in Vandyke which is to be found in no other painter, and which exactly conveys the idea of the soft, smooth, sliding, continuous, delicately varied surface of the skin. The objects in his pictures have the least possible difference of light and shade, and are presented to the eye without passing through any indirect medium. It is this extreme purity and silvery clearness of tone, together with the facility and precision of his particular forms, and a certain



air of fashionable elegance, characteristic of the age in which he flourished, that places Vandyke in the first rank of portrait painters.

If ever there was a man of genius in the art, it was Rembrandt. He might be said to have created a medium of his own, through which he saw all objects. He was the grossest and the least vulgar, that is to say, the least common-place in his grossness, of all men. He was the most downright, the least fastidious of the imitators of nature. He took any object, he cared not what, how mean soever in form, colour, and expression ; and from the light and shade which he threw upon it, it came out gorgeous from his hands. As Vandyke made use of the smallest contrasts of light and shade, and painted as if in the open air, Rembrandt used the most violent and abrupt contrasts in this respect, and painted his objects as if in a dungeon. His pictures may be said to be "bright with excessive darkness." His vision had acquired a lynx-eyed sharpness from the artificial obscurity to which he had accustomed himself. "Mystery and silence hung upon his pencil." Yet he could pass rapidly from one extreme to another, and dip his colours with equal success in the gloom of night or in the blaze of the noon-day sun. In surrounding different objects with a medium of imagination, solemn or dazzling, he was a true poet ; in all the rest he was a mere painter, but a painter of no common stamp. The powers of his hand were equal to those of his eye ; and indeed he could not have attempted the subjects he did, without an execution as masterly as his knowledge was profound. His colours are sometimes dropped in lumps on the canvass ; at other times they are laid on as smooth as glass ; and he not unfrequently painted with the handle of his brush. He

had an eye for all objects as far as he had seen them. His history and landscapes are equally fine in their way. His landscapes we could look at for ever, though there is nothing in them. But "they are of the earth, earthy." It seems as if he had dug them out of nature. Every thing is so true, so real, so full of all the feelings and associations which the eye can suggest to the other senses, that we immediately take as strong an affection to them as if they were our home—the very place where we were brought up. No length of time could add to the intensity of the impression they convey. Rembrandt is the least classical and the most romantic of all painters. His *Jacob's Ladder* is more like a dream than any other picture that ever was painted. The figure of Jacob himself is thrown in one corner of the picture like a bundle of clothes, while the angels hover above the darkness in the shape of airy wings.

It would be needless to prove that the generality of the Dutch painters copied from actual objects. They have become almost a bye-word for carrying this principle into its abuse, by copying every thing they saw, and having no choice or preference of one thing to another, unless that they preferred that which was most obvious and common. We forgive them. They perhaps did better in faithfully and skilfully imitating what they had seen, than in imagining what they had not seen. Their pictures at least show that there is nothing in nature, however mean or trivial, that has not its beauty, and some interest belonging to it, if truly represented. We prefer Vangoyen's views on the borders of a canal, the yellow-tufted bank and passing sail, or Ruysdael's woods and sparkling waterfalls, to the most classical or epic compositions which they



could have invented out of nothing; and we think that Teniers' boors, old women, and children, are very superior to the little carved ivory Venuses in the pictures of Vanderneer; just as we think Hogarth's *Marriage à la Mode* is better than his *Sigismunda*, or, as Mr. Wilkie's *Card-Players* is better than his *Alfred*. We should not assuredly prefer a *Dutch Fair* by Teniers to a *Cartoon* by Raffaele; but we suspect we should prefer a *Dutch Fair* by Teniers to a *Cartoon* by the same master; or we should prefer truth and nature in the simplest dress, to affectation and inanity in the most pompous disguise. Whatever is genuine in art must proceed from the impulse of nature and individual genius.

In the French school there are but two names of high and established reputation, N. Poussin and Claude Lorraine. Of the former we have already spoken; of the latter we shall give our opinion when we come to speak of our own Wilson. We ought not to pass over the names of Murillo and Velasquez, those admirable Spanish painters. It is difficult to characterize their peculiar excellences as distinct from those of the Italian and Dutch schools. They may be said to hold a middle rank between the painters of mind and body. They express not so much thought and sentiment, nor yet the mere exterior, as the life and spirit of the man. Murillo is probably at the head of that class of painters who have treated subjects of common life. After making the colours on the canvass feel and think, the next best thing is to make them breathe and live. But there is in Murillo's pictures of this kind a look of real life, a cordial flow of native animal spirits, which we find nowhere else. We might here refer particularly

to his picture of the *Two Spanish Beggar Boys*, in the collection at Dulwich College, which cannot easily be forgotten by those who have ever seen it.

We come now to treat of the progress of art in Britain.

We shall speak first of Hogarth, both as he is the first name in the order of time that we have to boast of, and as he is the greatest comic painter of any age or country. His pictures are not imitations of still life, or mere transcripts of incidental scenes or customs ; but powerful moral satires, exposing vice and folly in their most ludicrous points of view, and, with a profound insight into the weak sides of character and manners, in all their tendencies, combinations, and contrasts. There is not a single picture of his, containing a representation of merely natural or domestic scenery. His object is not so much "to hold the mirror up to nature," as "to show vice her own feature, scorn her own image." Folly is there seen at the height—the moon is at the full—it is the very error of the time. There is a perpetual collision of eccentricities, a tilt and tournament of absurdities, pampered into all sorts of affectation, airy, extravagant, and ostentatious ! Yet he is as little a caricaturist as he is a painter of still life. Criticism has not done him justice, though public opinion has. His works have received a sanction which it would be vain to dispute, in the universal delight and admiration with which they have been regarded, from their first appearance to the present moment. If the quantity of amusement, or of matter for reflection, which they have afforded, is that by which we are to judge of precedence among the intellectual benefactors of mankind, there are perhaps few persons who can put in a stronger claim to our gratitude than Hogarth. The wonderful knowledge which he possessed

of human life and manners is only to be surpassed (if it can be) by the powers of invention with which he has arranged his materials, and by the mastery of execution with which he has embodied and made tangible the very thoughts and passing movements of the mind. Some persons object to the style of Hogarth's pictures, or the class to which they belong. First, Hogarth belongs to no class, or, if he belongs to any, it is to the same class as Fielding, Smollett, Vanbrugh, and Molière. Besides, the merit of his pictures does not depend on the nature of his subjects, but on the knowledge displayed of them, on the number of ideas, on the fund of observation and amusement contained in them. Make what deductions you please for the vulgarity of the subjects—yet in the research, the profundity, the absolute truth and precision of the delineation of character,—in the invention of incident, in wit and humour, in life and motion, in everlasting variety and originality,—they never have been, and probably will never be, surpassed. They stimulate the faculties, as well as amuse them. "Other pictures we see, Hogarth's we read!"<sup>1</sup>

There is one error which has been frequently entertained on this subject, and which we wish to correct; namely, that Hogarth's genius was confined to the imitation of the coarse humours and broad farce of the lowest life. But he excelled quite as much in exhibiting the vices, the folly, and frivolity of the fashionable manners of his time. His fine ladies do not yield the palm of ridicule to his waiting-maids, and his lords and his porters are on a very respectable footing of equality. He is quite at home, either in

<sup>1</sup> See an admirable essay on the genius of Hogarth, by Charles Lamb, in a periodical work called *The Reflector*.

St. Giles's or St. James's. There is no want, for example, in his *Marriage à la Mode*, or his *Taste in High Life*, of affectation verging into idiocy, or of languid sensibility that might

Die of a rose in aromatic pain.

Many of Hogarth's characters would form admirable illustrations of Pope's Satires, who was contemporary with him. In short, Hogarth was a painter of real, not of low life. He was, as we have said, a satirist, and consequently his pencil did not dwell on the grand and beautiful, but it glanced with equal success at the absurdities and peculiarities of high or low life, "of the great vulgar and the small."

To this it must be added, that he was as great a master of passion as of humour. He succeeded in low tragedy as much as in low or genteel comedy, and had an absolute power in moving the affections and rending the hearts of the spectators, by depicting the effects of the most dreadful calamities of human life on common minds and common countenances. Of this the *Rake's Progress*, particularly the bedlam scene, and many others, are unanswerable proofs. Hogarth's merits as a mere artist are not confined to his prints. In general, indeed, this is the case. But when he chose to take pains, he could add the delicacies of execution and colouring in the highest degree to those of character and composition; as is evident in his series of pictures, all equally well painted, of the *Marriage à la Mode*.

We shall next speak of Wilson, whose pictures may be divided into three classes,—his Italian landscapes, or imitations of the manner of Claude,—his copies of English scenery,—and his historical compositions. The first of these are, in our opinion, by much the best; and we appeal, in support of this opinion, to the *Apollo and the Sea-*

*sons*, and to the *Phaeton*. The figures are of course out of the question (these being as uncouth and slovenly, as Claude's are insipid and finical); but the landscape in both pictures is delightful. In looking at them we breathe the air which the scene inspires, and feel the genius of the place present to us. In the first there is the cool freshness of a misty spring morning; the sky, the water, the dim horizon, all convey the same feeling. The fine grey tone, and varying outline of the hills; the graceful form of the retiring lake, broken still more by the hazy shadows of the objects that repose on its bosom; the light trees that expand their branches in the air; and the dark stone figure and mouldering temple, that contrast strongly with the broad clear light of the rising day,—give a charm, a truth, a force and harmony to this composition, which produce the greater pleasure the longer it is dwelt on. The distribution of light and shade resembles the effect of light on a globe. The *Phaeton* has the dazzling fervid appearance of an autumnal evening; the golden radiance streams in solid masses from behind the flickering clouds; every object is baked in the sun;—the brown fore-ground, the thick foliage of the trees, the streams, shrunk and stealing along behind the dark high banks,—combine to produce that richness and characteristic unity of effect which is to be found only in nature, or in art derived from the study and imitation of nature. These two pictures, as they have the greatest general effect, are also more carefully finished than any other pictures we have seen of his.

In general, Wilson's views of English scenery want almost every thing that ought to recommend them. The subjects he has chosen are not well fitted for the landscape painter, and there is nothing in the execution to redeem



them. Ill-shaped mountains, or great heaps of earth,—trees that grow against them without character or elegance,—motionless waterfalls,—a want of relief, of transparency, and distance, without the imposing grandeur of real magnitude, (which it is scarcely within the province of art to give,)—are the chief features and defects of this class of his pictures. In more confined scenes the effect must depend almost entirely on the difference in the execution and the details; for the difference of colour alone is not sufficient to give relief to objects placed at a small distance from the eye. But in Wilson there are commonly no details,—all is loose and general; and this very circumstance, which might assist him in giving the massy contrasts of light and shade, deprived his pencil of all force and precision within a limited space. In general, air is necessary to the landscape painter; and, for this reason, the lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland afford few subjects for landscape painting. However stupendous the scenery of that country is, and however powerful and lasting the impression which it must always make on the imagination, yet the effect is not produced merely through the medium of the eye, but arises chiefly from collateral and associated feelings. There is the knowledge of the physical magnitude of the objects in the midst of which we are placed,—the slow, improgressive motion which we make in traversing them;—there is the abrupt precipice, the torrent's roar, the boundless expanse of the prospect from the highest mountains,—the difficulty of their ascent, their loneliness and silence;—in short, there is a constant sense and superstitious awe of the collective power of matter, of the gigantic and eternal forms of nature, on which, from the beginning of time, the hand of



man has made no impression, and which, by the lofty reflections they excite in us, give a sort of intellectual sublimity even to our sense of physical weakness. But there is little in all these circumstances that can be translated into the *picturesque*, which makes its appeal immediately to the eye.

Wilson's historical landscapes, his *Niobe*, *Celadon*, and *Amelia*, &c., do not, in our estimation, display either true taste or fine imagination, but are affected and violent exaggerations of clumsy common nature. They are made up mechanically of the same stock of materials,—an overhanging rock, bare shattered trees, black rolling clouds, and forked lightning. The figures in the most celebrated of these are not, like the children of Niobe, punished by the gods, but like a group of rustics crouching from a hail-storm. We agree with Sir Joshua Reynolds, that Wilson's mind was not, like N. Poussin's, sufficiently imbued with the knowledge of antiquity, to transport the imagination three thousand years back, to give natural objects a sympathy with preternatural events, and to inform rocks, and trees, and mountains with the presence of a God. To sum up his general character, we may observe that, besides his excellence in aërial perspective, Wilson had great truth, harmony, and depth of local colouring. He had a fine feeling of the proportions and conduct of light and shade, and also an eye for graceful form, as far as regards the bold and varying outlines of indefinite objects, as may be seen in his foregrounds, &c., where the artist is not tied down to an imitation of characteristic and articulate forms. In his figures, trees, cattle, and in everything having a determinate and regular form, his pencil was not only deficient in accuracy of

outline, but even in perspective and actual relief. His trees, in particular, frequently seem pasted on the canvass, like botanical specimens. In fine, we cannot subscribe to the opinion of those who assert that Wilson was superior to Claude as a man of genius; nor can we discern any other grounds for this opinion than what would lead to the general conclusion,—that the more slovenly the performance the finer the picture, and that that which is imperfect is superior to that which is perfect. It might be said, on the same principle, that the coarsest sign-painting is better than the reflection of a landscape in a mirror; and the objection that is sometimes made to the mere imitation of nature cannot be made to the landscapes of Claude, for in them the graces themselves have, with their own hands, assisted in selecting and disposing every object. Is the general effect in *his* pictures injured by the details? Is the truth inconsistent with the beauty of the imitation? Does the perpetual profusion of objects and scenery, all perfect in themselves, interfere with the simple grandeur and comprehensive magnificence of the whole? Does the precision with which a plant is marked in the fore-ground take away from the air-drawn distinctions of the blue glimmering horizon? Is there any want of that endless airy space, where the eye wanders at liberty under the open sky, explores distant objects, and returns back as from a delightful journey? There is no comparison between Claude and Wilson. Sir Joshua Reynolds used to say that there would be another Raffaele before there would be another Claude. His landscapes have all that is exquisite and refined in art and nature. Every thing is moulded into grace and harmony; and, at the touch of his pencil, shepherds with their flocks,

temples and groves, and winding glades and scattered hamlets, rise up in never-ending succession, under the azure sky and the resplendent sun, while

Universal Pan,  
Knit with the graces, and the hours in dance,  
Leads on the eternal spring.—

Michel Angelo has left, in one of his sonnets, a fine apostrophe to the earliest poet of Italy:

Fain would I, to be what our Dante was,  
Forego the happiest fortunes of mankind.

What landscape-painter does not feel this of Claude.<sup>1</sup>

We have heard an anecdote connected with the reputation of Gainsborough's pictures, which rests on pretty good authority. Sir Joshua Reynolds, at one of the academy dinners, speaking of Gainsborough, said to a friend, "He is undoubtedly the best English landscape painter." "No," said Wilson, who overheard the conversation, "he is not the best landscape painter, but he is the best portrait painter in England." They were both wrong; but the story is creditable to the versatility of Gainsborough's talents.

Those of his portraits which we have seen are not in the first rank. They are, in good measure, imitations of Vandyke, and have more an air of gentility than of nature. His landscapes are of two classes or periods, his early and his later pictures. The former are minute imitations of nature, or of painters who imitated nature, such as Ruysdael, &c., some of which have great truth and clearness.

<sup>1</sup> This painter's book of studies from nature, commonly called *Liber Veritatis*, disproves the truth of the general opinion, that his landscapes are mere artificial compositions; for the finished pictures are nearly fac-similes of the original sketches.

His later pictures are flimsy caricatures of Rubens, who himself carried inattention to the details to the utmost limit that it would bear. Many of Gainsborough's later landscapes may be compared to bad water-colour drawings, washed in by mechanical movements of the hand, without any communication with the eye. The truth seems to be, that Gainsborough found there was something wanting in his *early manner*, that is, something beyond the literal imitation of the details of natural objects; and he appears to have concluded rather hastily, that the way to arrive at that *something more* was to discard truth and nature altogether. His fame rests principally, at present, on his fancy pieces, cottage children, shepherd boys, &c. These have often great truth, great sweetness, and the subjects are often chosen with great felicity. We too often find, however, even in his happiest efforts, a consciousness in the turn of the limbs, and a pensive languor in the expression, which is not taken from nature. We think the gloss of art is never so ill bestowed as on such subjects, the essence of which is simplicity. It is, perhaps, the general fault of Gainsborough, that he presents us with an ideal common life, of which we have had a surfeit in poetry and romance. His subjects are softened and sentimentalized too much; it is not simple unaffected nature that we see, but nature sitting for her picture. Our artist, we suspect, led the way to that masquerade style, which piques itself on giving the air of an Adonis to the driver of a hay cart, and models the features of a milk-maid on the principles of the antique. His *Woodman's Head* is admirable. Nor can too much praise be given to his *Shepherd Boy in a Storm*, in which the unconscious simplicity of the boy's expression, looking up with his hands folded and with timid wonder,—the

noisy chattering of a magpie perched above,—and the rustling of the coming storm in the branches of the trees,—produce a most delightful and romantic impression on the mind.

Gainsborough was to be considered, perhaps, rather as a man of delicate taste, and of an elegant and feeling mind, than as a man of genius ; as a lover of the art rather than an artist. He devoted himself to it, with a view to amuse and soothe his mind, with the ease of a gentleman, not with the severity of a professional student. He wished to make his pictures, like himself, amiable ; but a too constant desire to please almost unavoidably leads to affectation and effeminacy. He wanted that vigour of intellect which perceives the beauty of truth ; and thought that painting was to be gained, like other mistresses, by flattery and smiles. It was an error which we are disposed to forgive in one, around whose memory, both as an artist and a man, many fond recollections, many vain regrets, must always linger.<sup>1</sup>

The authority of Sir Joshua Reynolds, both from his example and instructions, has had, and still continues to have, a considerable influence on the state of art in this country. That influence has been, on the whole, unquestionably beneficial in itself, as well as highly creditable to the rare talents and elegant mind of Sir Joshua ; for it has raised the art of painting from the lowest state of degradation,—of dry, meagre, lifeless, inanity,—to something at least respectable, and bearing an affinity to the rough

<sup>1</sup> The idea of the necessity of improving upon nature, and giving what was called a *flattering likeness*, was universal in this country fifty years ago, so that Gainsborough is not to be so much blamed for tampering with his subjects.



strength and bold spirit of the national character. Whether the same implicit deference to his authority, which has helped to advance the art thus far, may not, among other causes, limit and retard its future progress,—whether there are not certain original errors, both in his principles and practice, which the farther they are proceeded in, the farther they will lead us from the truth,—whether there is not a systematic bias from the right line, by which alone we can arrive at the goal of the highest perfection,—are questions well worth considering.

We shall begin with Sir Joshua's merits as an artist. There is one error which we wish to correct at setting out, because we think it important. There is not a greater or more unaccountable mistake than the supposition that Sir Joshua Reynolds owed his success or excellence in his profession to his having been the first who introduced into this country more general principles of the art, and who raised portrait to the dignity of history, from the low drudgery of copying the peculiarities, meannesses, and details of individual nature, which was all that had been attempted by his immediate predecessors. This is so far from being true, that the very reverse is the fact. If Sir Joshua did not give these details and peculiarities so much as might be wished, those who went before him did not give them at all. Those pretended general principles of the art, which, it is said, "alone give value and dignity to it," had been pushed to their extremest absurdity before his time; and it was in getting rid of the mechanical systematic monotony and *middle forms*, by the help of which, Lely, Kneller, Hudson, the French painters, and others, carried on their manufactories of history and face painting, and in returning (as far as he did return) to the truth and force of indi-



vidual nature, that the secret both of his fame and fortune lay. The pedantic servile race of artists whom Reynolds superseded, had carried the abstract principle of improving on nature to such a degree of refinement, that they left it out altogether, and confounded all the varieties and irregularities of form, feature, character, expression, or attitude, in the same artificial mould of fancied grace and fashionable insipidity. The portraits of Kneller, for example, seem all to have been turned in a machine ; the eye-brows are arched as if by a compass, the mouth curled, and the chin dimpled ; the head turned on one side, and the hands placed in the same affected position. The portraits of this mannerist, therefore, are as like one another as the dresses which were then in fashion, and have the same "dignity and value" as the full bottomed wigs which graced their originals. The superiority of Reynolds consisted in his being varied and natural, instead of being artificial and uniform. The spirit, grace, or dignity which he added to his portraits, he borrowed from nature, and not from the ambiguous quackery of rules. His feeling of truth and nature was too strong to permit him to adopt the unmeaning style of Kneller and Hudson ; but his logical acuteness was not such as to enable him to detect the verbal fallacies and speculative absurdities which he had learned from Richardson and Coypel ; and from some defects in his own practice, he was led to confound negligence with grandeur. But of this hereafter.

Sir Joshua Reynolds owed his vast superiority over his contemporaries to incessant practice and habitual attention to nature, to quick organic sensibility, to considerable power of observation, and still greater taste in perceiving and availing himself of those excellences of others which lay

within his own walk of art. We can by no means look upon Sir Joshua as having a claim to the first rank of genius. He would hardly have been a great painter if other great painters had not lived before him. He would not have given a first impulse to the art; nor did he advance any part of it beyond the point where he found it. He did not present any new view of nature, nor is he to be placed in the same class with those who did. Even in colour, his pallet was spread for him by the old masters; and his eye imbibed its full perception of depth and harmony of tone from the Dutch and Venetian schools rather than from nature. His early pictures are poor and flimsy. He indeed learned to see the finer qualities of nature through the works of art, which he, perhaps, might never have discovered in nature itself. He became rich by the accumulation of borrowed wealth, and his genius was the offspring of taste. He combined and applied the materials of others to his own purpose with admirable success; he was an industrious compiler or skilful translator, not an original inventor in art. The art would remain, in all its essential elements, just where it is, if Sir Joshua had never lived. He has supplied the industry of future plagiarists with no new materials. But it has been well observed, that the value of every work of art, as well as the genius of the artist, depends not more on the degree of excellence than on the degree of originality displayed in it. Sir Joshua, however, was perhaps the most original imitator that ever appeared in the world; and the reason of this, in a great measure, was, that he was compelled to combine what he saw in art with what he saw in nature, which was constantly before him. The portrait painter is, in this respect, much less liable than the historical painter to de-

viate into the extremes of manner and affectation ; for he cannot discard nature altogether under the excuse that *she only puts him out*. He must meet her face to face ; and if he is not incorrigible, he will see something there that cannot fail to be of service to him. Another circumstance which must have been favourable to Sir Joshua was, that though not the originator *in point of time*, he was the first Englishman who transplanted the higher excellences of his profession into his own country, and had the merit, if not of an inventor, of a reformer of the art. His mode of painting had the graces of novelty in the age and country in which he lived ; and he had, therefore, all the stimulus to exertion which arose from the enthusiastic applause of his contemporaries, and from a desire to expand and refine the taste of the public.

To an eye for colour and for effects of light and shade, Sir Joshua united a strong perception of individual character,—a lively feeling of the quaint and grotesque in expression, and great mastery of execution. He had comparatively little knowledge of drawing, either as it regarded proportion or form. The beauty of some of his female faces and figures arises almost entirely from their softness and fleshiness. His pencil wanted firmness and precision. The expression, even of his best portraits, seldom implies either lofty or impassioned intellect or delicate sensibility. He also wanted grace, if grace requires simplicity. The mere negation of stiffness and formality is not grace ; for looseness and distortion are not grace. His favourite attitudes are not easy and natural, but the affectation of ease and nature. They are violent deviations from a right line. Many of the figures in his fancy pieces are placed in postures in which they could not remain for an instant without

extreme difficulty and awkwardness. We might instance the *Girl drawing with a Pencil*, and some others. His portraits are his best pictures, and of these his portraits of men are the best ; his pictures of children are the next in value. He had fine subjects for the former, from the masculine sense and originality of character of many of the persons whom he painted ; and he had also a great advantage, as far as practice went, in painting a number of persons of every rank and description. Some of the finest and most interesting are those of Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith (which is, however, too much a mere sketch), Barette, Dr. Burney, John Hunter, and the inimitable portrait of Bishop Newton. The elegant simplicity of character, expression, and drawing, preserved throughout the last picture, even to the attitude and mode of handling, discover the true genius of a painter. We also remember to have seen a print of Thomas Wharton, than which nothing could be more characteristic or more natural. These were all Reynolds' intimate acquaintances, and it could not be said of them that they were men of "no mark or likelihood." Their traits had probably sunk deep into the artist's mind ; he painted them as pure studies from nature, copying the real image existing before him, with all its known characteristic peculiarities ; and, with as much wisdom as good-nature, sacrificing the graces on the altar of friendship. They are downright portraits and nothing more, and they are valuable in proportion. In his portraits of women, on the contrary, with very few exceptions, Sir Joshua appears to have consulted either the vanity of his employers or his own fanciful theory. They have not the look of individual nature, nor have they, to compensate the want of this, either peculiar elegance of form, refinement of expression, delicacy

of complexion, or gracefulness of manner. Vandyke's attitudes have been complained of as stiff and confined. Reynolds, to avoid this defect, has fallen into the contrary extreme of negligence and contortion. His female figures, which aim at gentility, are twisted into that serpentine line, the idea of which he ridiculed so much in Hogarth. Indeed, Sir Joshua, in his *Discourses* (see his account of Correggio), speaks of grace as if it were nearly allied to affectation. Grace signifies that which is pleasing and natural in the posture and motions of the human form, as beauty is more properly applied to the form itself. That which is stiff, inanimate, and without motion, cannot, therefore, be graceful; but to suppose that a figure, to be graceful, need only be put into some languishing or extravagant posture, is to mistake flutter and affectation for ease and elegance.

Sir Joshua's children, as we have said above, are among his *chef d'œuvres*. The faces of children have in general that want of precision of outline, that prominence of relief, and strong contrast of colour, which were peculiarly adapted to his style of painting. The arch simplicity of expression, and the grotesque character which he has given to the heads of his children, were, however, borrowed from Correggio. His *Puck* is the most masterly of all these; and the colouring, execution, and character, are alike exquisite. The single figure of the *Infant Hercules* is also admirable. Many of those to which his friends have suggested historical titles are mere common portraits or casual studies. Thus the *Infant Samuel* is an innocent little child saying its prayers at the bed's feet: it has nothing to do with the story of the Hebrew prophet. The same objection will apply to many of his fancy pieces and historical compositions. There is often no connection be-



tween the picture and the subject but the name. Even his celebrated Iphigenia, beautiful as she is, and prodigal of charms, does not answer to the idea of the story. In drawing the naked figure, Sir Joshua's want of truth and firmness of outline became more apparent; and his mode of laying on his colours, which in the face and extremities was relieved and broken by the abrupt inequalities of surface and variety of tints in each part, produced a degree of heaviness and opacity in the larger masses of flesh-colour, which can indeed only be avoided by extreme delicacy or extreme lightness of execution.

Shall we speak the truth at once? In our opinion, Sir Joshua did not possess either that high imagination, or those strong feelings, without which no painter can become a poet in his art. His larger historical compositions have been generally allowed to be most liable to objection in a critical point of view. We shall not attempt to judge them by scientific or technical rules, but make one or two observations on the character and feeling displayed in them. The highest subject which Sir Joshua has attempted was the *Count Ugolino*, and it was, as might be expected from the circumstances, a total failure. He had, it seems, painted a study of an old beggar-man's head; and some person, who must have known as little of painting as of poetry, persuaded the unsuspecting artist that it was the exact expression of Dante's Count Ugolino, one of the most grand, terrific, and appalling characters in modern fiction. Reynolds, who knew nothing of the matter but what he was told, took his good fortune for granted, and only extended his canvass to admit the rest of the figures. The attitude and expression of Count Ugolino himself are what the artist intended them to be, till they



were pampered into something else by the officious vanity of friends—those of a common mendicant at the corner of a street, waiting patiently for some charitable donation. The imagination of the painter took refuge in a parish work-house, instead of ascending the steps of the Tower of Famine. The hero of Dante is a lofty, high-minded, and unprincipled Italian nobleman, who had betrayed his country to the enemy, and who, as a punishment for his crime, is shut up with his four sons in the dungeon of the citadel, where he shortly finds the doors barred against him, and food withheld. He in vain watches with eager feverish eye the opening of the door at the accustomed hour, and his looks turn to stone; his children one by one drop down dead at his feet; he is seized with blindness, and, in the agony of his despair, he gropes on his knees after them,

..... Calling each by name  
For three days after they were dead.

Even in the other world he is represented with the same fierce, dauntless, unrelenting character, “gnawing the skull of his adversary, his fell repast.” The subject of the *Laocoon* is scarcely equal to that described by Dante. The horror *there* is physical and momentary; in the other, the imagination fills up the long, obscure, dreary void of despair, and joins its unutterable pangs to the loud cries of nature. What is there in the picture to convey the ghastly horrors of the scene, or the mighty energy of soul with which they are borne? His picture of *Macbeth* is full of wild and grotesque images; and the apparatus of the witches contains a very elaborate and well-arranged inventory of dreadful objects. His Cardinal Beaufort is a fine display of rich mellow colouring; and there is something

gentlemanly and Shakespearian in the king and attendant nobleman. At the same time we think the expression of the cardinal himself is too much one of physical horror, a canine gnashing of the teeth, like a man strangled. This is not the best style of history. Mrs. Siddons as the *Tragic Muse* is neither the tragic muse nor Mrs. Siddons; and we have still stronger objections to *Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy*.

There is a striking similarity between Sir Joshua Reynolds' theory and his practice; and as each of these has been appealed to in support of the other, it is necessary that we should examine both. Sir Joshua's practice was generally confined to the illustration of that part of his theory which relates to the more immediate imitation of nature; and it is to what he says on this subject that we shall chiefly direct our observations at present.

He lays it down as a general and invariable rule, that "*the great style in art, and the most PERFECT IMITATION OF NATURE, consists in avoiding the details and peculiarities of particular objects.*" This sweeping principle he applies almost indiscriminately to *portrait, history, and landscape*; and he appears to have been led to the conclusion itself, from supposing the imitation of particulars to be inconsistent with general rule and effect. It appears to us that the highest perfection of the art depends, not on separating, but on uniting general truth and effect with individual distinctness and accuracy.

*First*, It is said that the great style in painting, as it relates to the immediate imitation of external nature, consists in avoiding the details of particular objects; it consists neither in giving nor avoiding them, but in something quite different from both. Any one may avoid the details.

So far there is no difference between the *Cartoons* and a common sign-painting. Greatness consists in giving the larger masses and proportions with truth ;—this does not prevent giving the smaller ones too. The utmost grandeur of outline, and the broadest masses of light and shade, are perfectly compatible with the utmost minuteness and delicacy of detail, as may be seen in nature. It is not, indeed, common to see both qualities combined in the imitations of nature, any more than the combination of other excellences ; nor are we here saying to which the principal attention of the artist should be directed ; but we deny that, considered in themselves, the absence of the one quality is necessary or sufficient to the production of the other.

If, for example, the form of the eye-brow is correctly given, it will be perfectly indifferent to the truth or grandeur of the design, whether it consists of one broad mark, or is composed of a number of hair-lines arranged in the same order. So, if the lights and shades are disposed in fine and large masses, the *breadth* of the picture, as it is called, cannot possibly be affected by the filling up of those masses with the details, that is, with the subordinate distinctions which appear in nature. The anatomical details in Michel Angelo, the ever-varying outline of Raffaele, the perfect execution of the Greek statues, do not destroy their symmetry or dignity of form ; and in the finest specimens of the composition of colour we may observe the largest masses combined with the greatest variety in the parts of which those masses are composed.

The *gross* style consists in giving no details, the *finical* in giving nothing else. Nature contains both large and small parts, both masses and details ; and the same may

be said of the most perfect works of art. The union of both kinds of excellence, of strength with delicacy, as far as the limits of human capacity and the shortness of human life would permit, is that which has established the reputation of the most successful imitators of nature. Farther, their most finished works are their best. The predominance, indeed, of either excellence in the best masters has varied according to their opinion of the relative value of these qualities,—the labour they had the time or the patience to bestow on their works, —the skill of the artist,—or the nature and extent of his subject. But if the rule here objected to, that the careful imitation of the parts injures the effect of the whole, be once admitted, slovenliness would become another name for genius, and the most unfinished performance be the best. That such has been the confused impression left on the mind by the perusal of Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses*, is evident from the practice as well as conversation of many (even eminent) artists. The late Mr. Opie proceeded entirely on this principle. He left many admirable studies of portraits, particularly in what relates to the disposition and effect of light and shade; but he never finished any of the parts, thinking them beneath the attention of a great artist. He went over the whole head the second day as he had done the first, and therefore made no progress. The picture at last, having neither the lightness of a sketch nor the accuracy of a finished work, looked coarse, laboured, and heavy. Titian is the most perfect example of high finishing. In him the details are engrafted on the most profound knowledge of effect, and attention to the character of what he represented. His pictures have the exact look of nature, the very tone and texture of flesh. The variety of his tints

is blended into the greatest simplicity. There is a proper degree both of solidity and transparency. All the parts hang together; every stroke tells, and adds to the effect of the rest. Sir Joshua seems to deny that Titian finished much, and says that he produced, by two or three strokes of his pencil, effects which the most laborious copyist would in vain attempt to equal. It is true, he availed himself in some degree of what is called *execution*, to facilitate his imitation of the details and peculiarities of nature; but it was to facilitate, not to supersede it. There can be nothing more distinct than execution and daubing. Titian, however, made a very moderate, though a very admirable, use of this power; and those who copy his pictures will find that the simplicity is in the results, not in the details. To conclude our observations on this head, we will only add, that while the artist thinks there is any thing to be done, either to the whole or to the parts of his picture, which can give it still more the look of nature, if he is willing to proceed, we would not advise him to desist. This rule is the more necessary to the young student, for he will relax in his attention as he grows older. And again, with respect to the subordinate parts of a picture, there is no danger that he will bestow a disproportionate degree of labour upon them, because he will not feel the same interest in copying them, and because a much less degree of accuracy will serve every purpose of deception.

*Secondly*, With regard to the imitation of expression, we can hardly agree with Sir Joshua, that "the perfection of portrait painting consists in giving the general idea or character without the individual peculiarities." No doubt, if we were to choose between the general character and the peculiarities of feature we ought to prefer the former. But



they are so far from being incompatible with, that they are not without some difficulty distinguishable from, each other. There is a general look of the face, a predominant expression arising from the correspondence and connexion of the different parts, which it is of the first and last importance to give, and without which no elaboration of detached parts, or marking of the peculiarities of single features, is worth any thing ; but which, at the same time, is not destroyed, but assisted, by the careful finishing, and still more by giving the exact outline, of each part.

It is on this point that the modern French and English schools differ, and, in our opinion, are both wrong. The English seem generally to suppose, that if they only leave out the subordinate parts, they are sure of the general result. The French, on the contrary, as erroneously imagine, that, by attending successively to each separate part, they must infallibly arrive at a correct whole ; not considering that, besides the parts, there is their relation to each other, and the general expression stamped upon them by the character of the individual, which to be seen must be felt ; for it is demonstrable that all character and expression, to be adequately represented, must be perceived by the mind and not by the eye only. The French painters give only lines and precise differences, the English only general masses and strong effects. Hence the two nations reproach one another with the difference of their styles of art,—the one, as dry, hard, and minute,—the other as gross, gothic, and unfinished ; and they will probably remain for ever satisfied with each other's defects, as they afford a very tolerable fund of consolation on either side.

Much has been said of *historical portrait* ; and we have no objection to this phrase, if properly understood. The giv-



ing historical truth to a portrait means, then, the representing the individual under one consistent, probable, and striking view; or showing the different features, muscles, &c. in one action, and modified by one principle. A portrait thus painted may be said to be *historical*; that is, it carries internal evidence of truth and propriety with it; and the number of individual peculiarities, as long as they are true to nature, cannot lessen, but must add to, the strength of the general impression.

It might be shown, if there were room in this place, that Sir Joshua has constructed his theory of the *ideal* in art upon the same mistaken principle of the negation or abstraction of *particular nature*. The *ideal* is not a negative but a positive thing. The leaving out the details or peculiarities of an individual face does not make it one jot more ideal. To paint history, is to paint nature as answering to a general, predominant, or preconceived idea in the mind, of strength, beauty, action, passion, thought, &c.: but the way to do this, is not to leave out the details, but to incorporate the general idea with the details; that is, to show the same expression actuating and modifying every movement of the muscles, and the same character preserved consistently through every part of the body. Grandeur does not consist in omitting the parts, but in connecting all the parts into a whole, and in giving their combined and varied action: abstract truth or ideal perfection does not consist in rejecting the peculiarities of form, but in rejecting all those which are not consistent with the character intended to be given, and in following up the same *general idea* of softness, voluptuousness, strength, activity, or any combination of these, through every ramification of the frame. But these modifications of form or expression can only be

learned from nature, and therefore the perfection of art must always be sought in nature. The ideal properly applies as much to the *idea* of ugliness, weakness, folly, meanness, vice, as of beauty, strength, wisdom, magnanimity, or virtue. The antique heads of fauns and satyrs, of Pan or Silenus, are quite as ideal as those of the Apollo or Bacchus; and Hogarth adhered to an idea of humour in his faces, as Raffaelle did to an idea of sentiment. But Raffaelle found the character of sentiment in nature as much as Hogarth did that of humour, otherwise neither of them would have given one or the other with such perfect truth, purity, force, and keeping. Sir Joshua Reynold's *ideal*, as consisting in a mere negation of individuality, bears just the same relation to real beauty or grandeur as caricature does to true comic character.

It is owing either to a mistaken theory of elevated art, or to the want of models in nature, that the English are hitherto without any painter of serious historical subjects, who can be placed in the first rank of genius. Many of the pictures of modern artists have shewn a capacity for correct and happy delineation of actual objects and domestic incidents only inferior to the masterpieces of the Dutch School. We might here mention the names of Wilkie, Collins, Heaphy, and many others. We have portrait-painters who have attained to a very high degree of excellence in all the branches of their art. In landscape, Turner has shewn a knowledge of the effects of air, and of powerful relief in objects, which was never surpassed. But in the highest walk of art—in giving the movements of the finer or loftier passions of the mind, this country has not produced a single painter who has made even a faint pa-

proach to the excellence of the great Italian painters. We have, indeed, a good number of specimens of the clay-figure, the anatomical mechanism, the regular proportions measured by a two-foot rule ;—large canvasses, covered with stiff figures, arranged in deliberate order, with the characters and story correctly expressed by uplifted eyes or hands, according to old receipt-books for the passions ; and with all the hardness and inflexibility of figures carved in wood, and painted over in good strong body colours, that look “as if some of nature’s journeymen had made them, and not made them well.” But we still want a Prometheus to give life to the cumbrous mass,—to throw an intellectual light over the opaque image,—to embody the inmost refinements of thought to the outward eye,—to lay bare the very soul of passion. That picture is of little comparative value which can be completely *translated* into another language,—of which the description in a common catalogue conveys all that is expressed by the picture itself ; for it is the excellence of every art to give what can be given by no other in the same degree. Much less is that picture to be esteemed which only injures and defaces the idea already existing in the mind’s eye,—which does not come up to the conception which the imagination forms of the subject, and substitutes a dull reality for high sentiment ; for the art is in this case an incumbrance not an assistance, and interferes with, instead of adding to, the stock of our pleasurable sensations. But we should be at a loss to point out, we will not say any English picture, but certainly any English painter, who, in heroic and classical composition, has risen to the height of his subject, and answered the expectation of the well-informed spectator, or excited the same impression by visible means as had

been excited by words or by reflection.<sup>1</sup> That this inferiority in English art is not owing to a deficiency of genius, imagination, or passion, is proved sufficiently by the works of our poets and dramatic writers, which, in loftiness and force, are not surpassed by those of any other nation. But whatever may be the depth of internal thought and feeling in the English character, it seems to be *more internal*; and, whether this is owing to habit or physical constitution, to have comparatively a less immediate and powerful communication with the organic expression of passion,—which exhibits the thoughts and feelings in the countenance, and furnishes matter for the historic muse of painting. The English artist is instantly sensible that the flutter, grimace, and extravagance of the French physiognomy, are incompatible with high history; and we are at no loss to explain in this way, that is, from the defect of living models, how it is that the productions of the French school are marked with all the affectation of national caricature, or sink into tame and lifeless imitations of the antique. May we not account satisfactorily for the general defects of our own historic productions in a similar way,—from a certain inertness and constitutional phlegm, which does not habitually impress the workings of the mind in correspondent traces on the countenance, and which may also render us less sensible of these outward and visible signs of passion, even when they are so impressed there? The irregularity of proportion and want of symmetry in the structure of the national features, though it certainly enhances the difficulty of infusing natural grace and grandeur into the works of

<sup>1</sup> If we were to make any qualification of this censure, it would be in favour of some of Mr. Northcote's compositions from early English history.

art, rather accounts for our not having been able to attain the exquisite refinements of Grecian sculpture, than for our not having rivalled the Italian painters in expression.

Mr. West formed no exception to, but a confirmation of, these general observations. His pictures have all that can be required in what relates to the composition of the subject; to the regular arrangement of the groups; the anatomical proportions of the human body; and the technical knowledge of expression,—as far as expression is reducible to abstract rules, and is merely a vehicle for the telling of a story; so that anger, wonder, sorrow, pity, &c. have each their appropriate and well-known designations. These, however, are but the instrumental parts of the art, the means, not the end; but beyond these Mr. West's pictures do not go. They never “snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.” They exhibit the *mask*, not the *soul* of expression. We doubt, whether, in the entire range of Mr. West's productions, meritorious and admirable as the design and composition often are, there is to be found one truly fine head. They display a total want of gusto. In Raffaello, the same divine spirit breathes through every part; it either agitates the inmost frame, or plays in gentle undulations on the trembling surface. Whether we see his figures bending with all the blandishments of maternal love, or standing in the motionless silence of thought, or hurried into the tumult of action, the whole is under the impulse of deep passion. But Mr. West saw hardly any thing in the human face but bones and cartilages; or, if he availed himself of the more flexible machinery of nerves and muscles, it was only by rule and method. The effect is not that which the soul of passion impresses on the countenance, and which the soul of genius alone can seize; but such as might, in a



good measure, be given to wooden puppets or pasteboard figures, pulled by wires, and taught to open the mouth, or knit the forehead, or raise the eyes in a very scientific manner. In fact, there is no want of art or learning in his pictures, but of nature and feeling.

It is not long ago since an opinion was very general, that all that was wanting to the highest splendour and perfection of the arts in this country might be supplied by academies and public institutions. There are *three* ways in which academies and public institutions may be supposed to promote the fine arts; either by furnishing the best models to the student, or by holding out immediate emolument and patronage, or by improving the public taste. We shall bestow a short consideration on the influence of each.

First, a constant reference to the best models of art necessarily tends to enervate the mind, to intercept our view of nature, and to distract the attention by a variety of unattainable excellence. An intimate acquaintance with the works of the celebrated masters may indeed add to the indolent refinements of taste, but will never produce one work of original genius, one great artist. In proof of the general truth of this observation, we might cite the history of the progress and decay of art in all countries where it has flourished. It is a little extraordinary, that if the real sources of perfection are to be sought in schools, in models, and public institutions, that wherever schools, models, and public institutions have existed, there the arts should regularly disappear,—that the effect should never follow from the cause.

The Greek statues remain to this day unrivalled,—the undisputed standard of the most perfect symmetry of form. In Italy the art of painting has had the same fate. After



its long and painful struggles in the time of the earlier artists, Cimabue, Ghirlandaio, Massaccio, and others, it burst out with a light almost too dazzling to behold, in the works of Titian, Michel Angelo, Raffaello, and Correggio; which was reflected with diminished lustre in the productions of their immediate disciples, lingered for a while with the school of the Carraccis, and expired with Guido Reni. From that period painting sunk to so low a state in Italy as to excite only pity or contempt. There is not a single name to redeem its faded glory from utter oblivion. Yet this has not been owing to any want of Dilettanti and Della Cruscan societies,—of academies of Florence, of Bologna, of Parma, and Pisa,—of honorary members and foreign correspondents—of pupils and teachers, professors and patrons, and the whole busy tribe of critics and connoisseurs.

What is become of the successors of Rubens, Rembrandt, and Vandyke? What have the French academicians done for the arts; or what will they ever do, but add intolerable affectation and grimace to centos of heads from the antique, and caricature Greek forms by putting them into opera attitudes? Nicholas Poussin is the only example on record in favour of the contrary theory, and we have already sufficiently noticed his defects. What extraordinary advances have we made in our own country in consequence of the establishment of the royal academy? What greater names has the English school to boast than those of Hogarth, Reynolds, and Wilson, who created it?

Again, we might cite, in support of our assertion, the works of Carlo Maratti, of Raphael Mengs, or of any of the effeminate school of critics and copyists, who have attempted to blend the borrowed beauties of others in a per-

fect whole. What do they contain, but a negation of every excellence which they pretend to combine? The assiduous imitator, in his attempts to grasp all, loses his hold of that which was placed within his reach; and, from aspiring at universal excellence, sinks into uniform mediocrity. The student who has models of every kind of excellence constantly before him, is not only diverted from that particular walk of art in which, by patient exertion, he might have obtained ultimate success, but, from having his imagination habitually raised to an overstrained standard of refinement, by the sight of the most exquisite examples in art, he becomes impatient and dissatisfied with his own attempts, determines to reach the same perfection all at once, or throws down his pencil in despair. Thus the young enthusiast, whose genius and energy were to rival the great masters of antiquity, or create a new era in the art itself, baffled in his first sanguine expectations, reposes in indolence on what others have done,—wonders how such perfection could have been achieved,—grows familiar with the minutest peculiarities of the different schools,—flutters between the splendour of Rubens and the grace of Raffaello, and ends in nothing. Such was not Correggio. He saw and felt for himself; he was of no school, but had his own world of art to create. That image of truth and beauty which existed in his mind he was forced to construct for himself, without rules or models. As it had arisen in his mind from the contemplation of nature, so he could only hope to embody it to others by the imitation of nature. We can conceive the work growing under his hands by slow and patient touches, approaching nearer to perfection, softened into finer grace, gaining strength from delicacy, and at last reflecting the pure image of nature on the can-

vass. Such is always the true progress of art ; such are the necessary means by which the greatest works of every kind have been produced. They have been the effect of power gathering strength from exercise, and warmth from its own impulse—stimulated to fresh efforts by conscious success, and by the surprise and strangeness of a new world of beauty opening to the delighted imagination. The triumphs of art were victories over the difficulties of art ; the prodigies of genius, the result of that strength which had grappled with nature. Titian copied even a plant or a piece of common drapery from the objects themselves ; and Raffaele is known to have made elaborate studies of the principal heads in his pictures. All the great painters of this period were thoroughly grounded in the first principles of their art ; had learned to copy a face, a hand, or an eye, and had acquired patience to finish a single figure before they undertook to paint extensive compositions. They knew that though fame is represented with her head above the clouds, her feet rest upon the earth. Genius can only have its full scope where, though much may have been done, more remains to do ; where models exist chiefly to show the deficiencies of art, and where the perfect idea is left to be filled up in the painter's imagination. When once the stimulus of novelty and of original exertion is wanting, generations repose on what has been done for them by their predecessors, as individuals, after a certain period, rest satisfied with the knowledge they have already acquired.

With regard to the pecuniary advantages arising from the public patronage of the arts, the plan unfortunately defeats itself ; for it multiplies its objects faster than it can satisfy their claims, and raises up a swarm of competitors

for the prize of genius from the dregs of idleness and dullness. The real patron is anxious to reward merit, not to encourage gratuitous pretensions to it ; to see that the man of genius *takes no detriment*, that another Wilson is not left to perish for want ;—not to propagate the breed of embryo candidates for fame. Offers of public and promiscuous patronage can in general be little better than a species of intellectual seduction, administering provocatives to vanity and avarice, and leading astray the youth of the nation by fallacious hopes, which can scarcely ever be realized. At the same time, the good that might be done by private taste and benevolence is in a great measure defeated. The moment that a few individuals of discernment and liberal spirit become members of a public body, they are no longer anything more than parts of a machine, which is usually wielded at will by some officious overweening pretender ; their good sense and good nature are lost in a mass of ignorance and presumption ; their names only serve to reflect credit on proceedings in which they have no share, and which are determined on by a majority of persons who have no interest in the arts but what arises from the importance attached to them by regular organization, and no opinions but what are dictated to them by some self-constituted judge. As far as we have had an opportunity of observing the conduct of such bodies of men, instead of taking the lead of public opinion, of giving a firm, manly, and independent tone to that opinion, they make it their business to watch all its caprices, and follow it in every casual turning. They dare not give their sanction to sterling merit struggling with difficulties, but take advantage of its success to reflect credit on their own reputation for sagacity. Their taste is a servile dependent

on their vanity, and their patronage has an air of pauperism about it. Perhaps the only public patronage which was ever really useful to the arts, or worthy of them, was that which they received first in Greece, and afterwards in Italy, from the religious institutions of the country ; when the artist felt himself, as it were, a servant at the altar ; when his hand gave a visible form to gods or heroes, angels or apostles ; and when the enthusiasm of genius was exalted by mingling with the flame of national devotion. The artist was not here degraded by being made the dependent on the caprice of wealth or fashion, but felt at once the servant and the benefactor of the public. He had to embody, by the highest efforts of his art, subjects which were sacred to the imagination and feelings of the spectators ; there was a common link, a mutual sympathy, between them in their common faith. Every other mode of patronage but that which arises either from the general institutions and manners of a people, or from the real unaffected taste of individuals, must, we conceive, be illegitimate, corrupted in its source, and either ineffectual or injurious to its professed object.

*Lastly*, Academies and institutions may be supposed to assist the progress of the fine arts, by promoting a wider taste for them.

In general, it must happen in the first stages of the arts, that as none but those who had a natural genius for them would attempt to practise them, so none but those who had a natural taste for them would pretend to judge of or criticise them. This must be an incalculable advantage to the man of true genius ; for it is no other than the privilege of being tried by his peers. In an age when connoisseurship had not become a fashion,—when religion,



war, and intrigue, occupied the time and thoughts of the great,—only those minds of superior refinement would be led to notice the works of art, who had a real sense of their excellence ; and, in giving way to the powerful bent of his own genius, the painter was most likely to consult the taste of his judges. He had not to deal with pretenders to taste, through vanity, affectation, and idleness. He had to appeal to the higher faculties of the soul,—to that deep and innate sensibility to truth and beauty, which required only fit objects to have its enthusiasm excited,—and to that independent strength of mind, which, in the midst of ignorance and barbarism, hailed and fostered genius wherever it met with it. Titian was patronized by Charles V. Count Castiglione was the friend of Raffaële. These were true patrons and true critics ; and, as there were no others, (for the world, in general, merely looked on and wondered), there can be little doubt, that such a period of dearth of factitious patronage would be most favourable to the full development of the greatest talents, and to the attainment of the highest excellence.

By means of public institutions, the number of candidates for fame and pretenders to criticism is increased beyond all calculation, while the quantity of genius and feeling remains much the same as before ; with these disadvantages, that the man of original genius is often lost among the crowd of competitors who would never have become such but from encouragement and example, and that the voice of the few whom nature intended for judges is apt to be drowned in the noisy and forward suffrages of shallow smatterers in taste.



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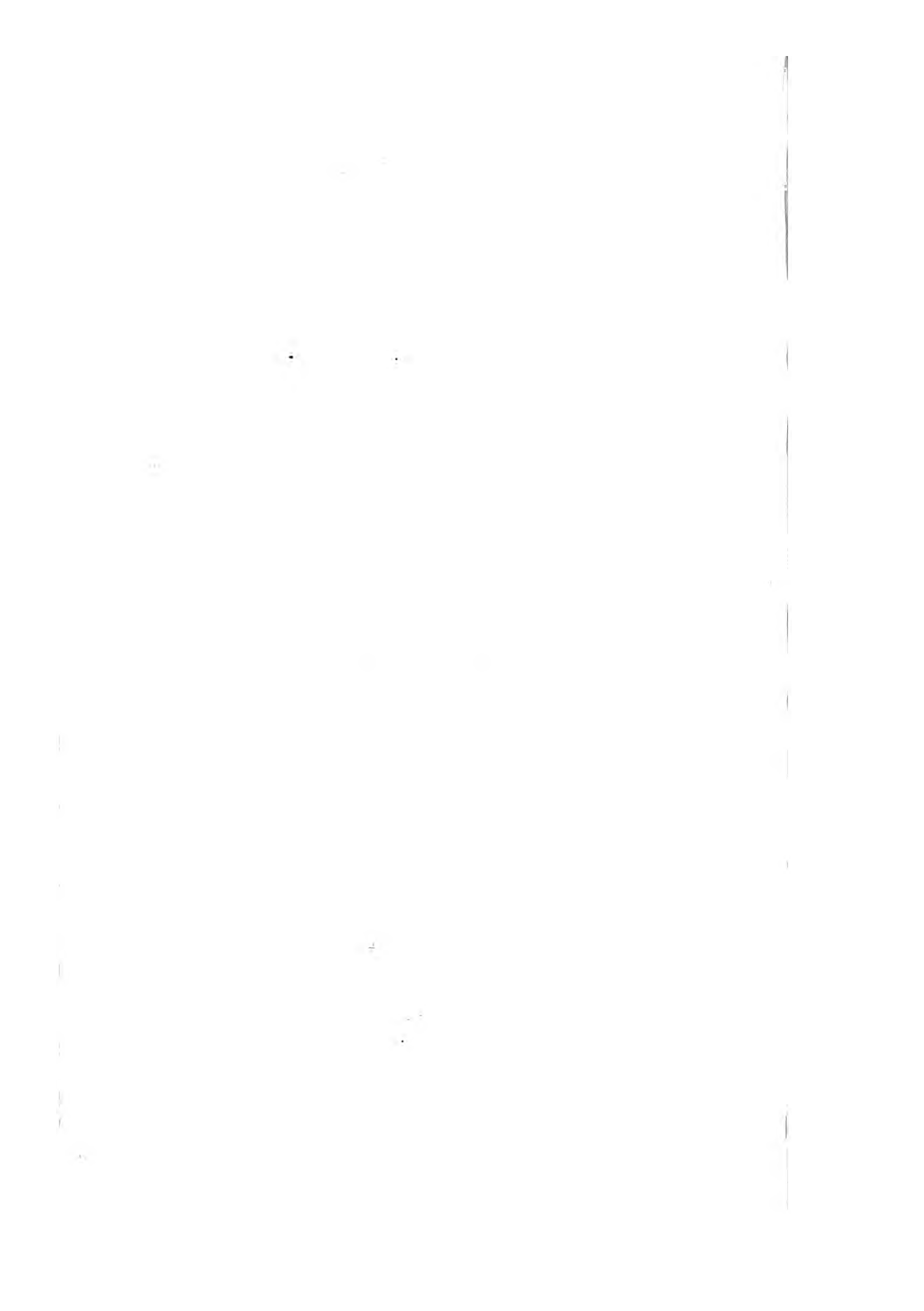
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**PAINTING,**

**BY**

**B. R. HAYDON, Esq.**



## ERRATA.

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- Page 69, note 1, *for Bristol read British.*  
... 91, line 7, *for fabulous read tabular.*  
... 128, ... 27, *for before that time, read about.*  
... 132, ... 10, *for Donatelo, read Donatello.*  
... 136, ... 11, *for Ceronino Cininni, read Cennino  
Cennini.*  
... 141, ... 27, *for Fountainebleau, read Fontainebleau.*  
... 153, ... 29, *for Athens read Olympia.*  
... 155, ... 28, *for long figure read lay.*  
... 159, ... 8, *for he proved read who.*  
... 166, ... 4, *for affection read affectation.*  
... 169, ... 18, *for Pompio Battone, read Pompeo Battoni.*  
... 179, ... 27, *for Montegua read Montegna.*  
... 204, ... 9, *for Edward IV. read Edward VI.*  
... 204, ... 14, *for not breaking, read breaking.*

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## P A I N T I N G .

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P A I N T I N G is the art of conveying thought by the imitation of things through the medium of form and colour, light and shadow. Colour, and light and shadow, can by themselves do little more than excite sensations of harmony and sentiment, independently of action, passion, or story; but if founded upon form, thoughts become clear, expressions of passion intelligible, and actions, gestures, and motions of the human frame defined and decided. *Form* therefore is the basis of painting, sculpture, architecture, and design of every description.

Any school of painting, therefore, which is established upon a principle different from this, or which makes the subordinate parts of colour, light, and shadow the principal law of its practice instead of a component part, is in opposition to the most celebrated schools in the world; for the most eminent both in Greece and in Italy, were indebted for their celebrity and renown to the strict observance of the doctrine here enunciated. In Greece, the schools of Sicyon, Corinth, Athens and Rhodes, and in Italy, those of Pisa, Florence, Rome, and Bologna, were the most important, the most use-



ful, and the most intellectual ; and in all these *form* constituted the great and fundamental law of their practice. But in Venice, colour took the lead ; it predominated too in Holland and Flanders ; and it has always reigned, to the sacrifice of common sense, in Britain. Yet for sound and philosophical views of art, as a vehicle of passion or of moral national influence, neither of these schools can be referred to, with the same conviction or confidence with which all nations can refer to the former great sources of sense, principle, and genius.

In what country Painting first originated, is nearly as difficult to discover, as it is to find a country where it never existed at all. Design, the basis of painting, must have begun with the very first instrument of necessity which man required. The origin of any art, science, or discovery, is not so much owing to the particular accident which happened to the individual concerned, as to the intellectual adaptation of that individual to receive impressions of a peculiar nature from the particular circumstance which occurred. Thus whether Music was invented by the man, who, listening to the sound of an anvil, instantly composed notes ; or whether Painting was discovered by the lovely girl, who, watching the shadow of her lover, as he sat silent at the prospect of parting, traced it upon the wall as a memento of their mutual affection ; whether it originated with Philocles in Egypt, or Cleanthes in Corinth, or long before Egypt or Greece were habitable ; the *principle* is the same. Without an inherent susceptibility to the impressions of sound, in preference to all other impressions, in the man, or an inherent susceptibility to the impressions of form equally intense in the girl, the intellectual faculties of either would have never been excited to compose notes, or to define figures. The art originated with

the first man who was born with such acute sensibility to the beauty of form, colour, and light and shadow, as to be impelled to convey his thoughts by positive imitation.

When the Spaniards landed in South America, the mode by which the natives conveyed intelligence of their arrival to king Montezuma was by painting the clothes of the strangers, their looks, their dress, and their ships. This certainly must have been the most ancient, because the most simple and obvious mode in the world of conveying thought, after oral communication. But independently of all theory, there cannot be a doubt of the extreme antiquity of painting. The walls of Babylon were painted after nature with different species of animals, hunting expeditions, and combats. Simiramis was represented on horseback striking a leopard with a dart, and her husband Ninus wounding a lion. "And I went in and saw, and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, *pourtrayed on the wall round about.*" (Ezek. viii. 18.) "She saw men *pourtrayed upon the wall*, the images of the Chaldeans *pourtrayed in vermilion*, girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in *dyed attire* upon their heads, all of them princes to look at, after the manner of the *Babylonians and Chaldeans.*" (chap. xxiii. 14, 15.) It is inferred from a passage of Diodorus Siculus, that these figures were painted first on the brick before burning, and then vitrified by fire.<sup>1</sup> But before this was done, experience must have been acquired of the liability to decay of painting upon external walls; and considering, too, that great statues were erected in Babylon, the arts must have existed amongst the Babylonians long before the period here referred to.

<sup>1</sup> Barry's *Lectures*.

But a great revolution has taken place in our ideas on this subject, from the decyphering of hieroglyphics, and we are now assured of the extreme antiquity of art, in ages hitherto deemed almost entirely fabulous. From Asiatic art we have been accustomed to turn to that of the Egyptians ; but it is no longer considered as a matter of speculation that the Ethiopians preceded the latter in knowledge, and that from this ancient people the Egyptians received gradually a knowledge of art. The course of civilisation probably descended from Ethiopia to Egypt; and yet we have evidence of the existence of Egyptian painting and sculpture more than eighteen centuries before Christ, and even then the arts were in the highest condition that the Egyptian school ever attained. From the most ancient records of the Jewish and Greek historians, in which Egyptian and Ethiopian monarchs are mentioned, and their actions narrated, we can now turn to corresponding traces of their existence and exploits commemorated upon the durable materials of the temples, tombs, and palaces which still remain. When therefore it is found that this method of interpreting hieroglyphics has proved to be correct, in all that we know of the Cæsars and the Ptolemies, or see casually alluded to respecting the Pharaohs, we have no right at all to dispute the truth of the same mode of interpretation when it indicates a still higher antiquity, though we have not the means of confirming it by collateral reference. Eighty miles above Dongola, Lord Prudhoe discovered the remains of a magnificent city, which he conceives to have been the capital of Tirhakah mentioned in the Bible ; and amongst these ruins he observed two nobly executed lions, specimens of Ethiopian skill. On the shoulders of one is the name of Amenoph III., who was called Memnon by Greek historians. The style and execution of these great works are evidence

of the talent of this people.<sup>1</sup> It is now certain that as early as the nineteenth century before Christ, the walls and temples of Thebes were decorated with paintings and sculpture, commemorating personal and historical events ; and certainly in comparing the designs on these temples with those of a later period, we must conclude that the Egyptian school of painting never exceeded their merit.<sup>2</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn is, that at this time the Egyptian priesthood had not interfered with art or artists ; but that the painters were left freely to commemorate the great actions of their employers, to study nature, and to do as they liked. Many of these actions are delineated in a natural manner, and there is a great deal of dignity in the figure of the hero ; the sea fights are also well grouped, and there are many of the Trajan-column figures, and not more gross perspective is visible. The colour is a mere illumination, and the composition as a whole infantine ; but there is proportion, and not absolute ignorance of the component parts.<sup>3</sup> After this period, art became a mere tool in the hands of the priests ; and as the law compelled the son to follow the profession of his father, it may be supposed that painting degenerated into the mere fac-simile of prescribed forms of gods, goddesses, and men, and that in the time of the Ptolemies it was little better than an illuminated hieroglyphic.

The Egyptians appear to have done every thing with reference to form. Their painting was at best but coloured sculpture. They seem to have been aware of the mortality of colours, and to have said, " As colours must go, let us cut out the designs in stone, so that at least form may remain

<sup>1</sup> Now in the **Bristol** Museum. *British*

<sup>2</sup> See last vol. of *Sculpture*, (*Dilletanti.*)

<sup>3</sup> See the French national work on *Egypt*.

in our granite sculpture, and defy every thing but the convulsion of the earth." First the designer drew the outline in red, then the master artist corrected it, then the sculptor cut it, then the painter coloured it, gods blue, goddesses yellow, men red, and draperies green and black; and such is the extreme dryness of the climate, that a traveller says, he saw in Nubia, a bas-relief half cut, with the red outline left for the rest, and that he wetted his finger and put it up, and immediately obliterated a part of the red chalk.

The Egyptians would seem to have been a severe people, as hard as their own granite.<sup>1</sup> They had an awful feeling of respect for the wisdom of their ancestors; they hated reform; no physician dared to prescribe a new medicine, and no painter dared to invent a new thought. Plato says, that the pictures of his day in Egypt were just the same as from ages immemorial;<sup>2</sup> and, according to Winkelman, another cause of their inferiority in painting, was the little estimation in which painters were held, and their extreme ignorance. Not a single painter of eminence has reached us, and but one sculptor, viz. Memnon, author of three statues at the entrance of the great temple at Thebes. In the knowledge of the figure it is impossible they could be great; for there is proof that they dared not touch the dead body for dissection, and even the embalmers risked their lives from the hatred of the populace.

Winkelman divides Egyptian design into three periods: First, from the earliest times to the conquest of Cambyses; secondly, from the conquest of Cambyses to the subjugation of the Persian and the establishment of the Greek dynasty in Egypt; and, thirdly, from that period to the time of Ha-

<sup>1</sup> *Odyss.* lib. xvii. v. 448.

<sup>2</sup> *De Legibus*, lib. 2.



drian.<sup>1</sup> When the paintings at Thebes were executed is not known. But they were upon the walls at the expulsion of the Shepherd Kings,<sup>2</sup> and this was the first period of their art, and before Moses. The Egyptians never, in either art, reached the power of making men, as Aristotle said of Polygnotus, *better* than they were; in other words, they never attained the true ideal beauty, founded on nature, yet above it. Their figures are debased transcripts of what they had about them, and therefore, so far authentic as to character. The Egyptian female heads are far from displeasing; they have a sleepy voluptuous eye,<sup>3</sup> a full and pleasant mouth, high cheek bones, dark brows, and there is something by no means disagreeable in the silent lazy look of their expression. But the very want of ideal beauty gives an assurance that the figures are Egyptian nature, and that every habit, public, private, civil and religious, is laid open to us, by the wonderful discoveries of Belzoni and his followers: it is almost as impossible now for an artist to be incorrect in painting an Egyptian subject, as it would be to err in painting a British one. In a tomb laid open by Belzoni, the characters of the procession were admirably distinguished; the Jew, the Egyptian, the Negro, and the Chaldæan, were as little liable to be confounded as if they had been before us. In their sculpture, however, there is more of science than in their painting. Sculpture was practised by the priesthood, and sculptors were called sacred stone-cutters. The great head of Memnon in the British Museum, is beautifully cut, the nose and mouth especially; and, considering its remote antiquity, it is really a great wonder.

Upon the whole, it is impossible to believe that the art

<sup>1</sup> Wink. lib. ii. chap. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See 2d vol. of *Ancient Sculpture*, (Dilletanti.)

<sup>3</sup> See *Description de l'Égypte*, tom. i. plates.



of painting, amongst other nations, owed much to the Egyptians; they had no colour, and no light and shadow, but only some form, some expression, and some character. The groups of the ruins of Elythia shew a great deal of nature and simplicity; the animals are varied, and the cows are lowing and gamboling; yet it is after all but childish work, and as the paintings at Thebes are the best, those of Elythia have not much to boast of.

Whether the Greeks owe their beginnings to Egypt, is more than doubtful, from the simple fact of the early Greek painters using *no blue*, whilst it was the constant practice of Egyptian painters to use blue in every thing.<sup>1</sup> Athens was founded by an Egyptian colony, and painters might be amongst the emigrants, as well as masons and sculptors; yet in the early state of things, painters were not an article of necessity, and it is problematical if in this alleged emigration, there were any persons of that class. The beginning of art was the same in all nations. They might improve each other; but we do not believe that painting was ever originally brought into one nation by another, or that there ever existed any, where it has not always been more or less known from the remotest period of their history.

After Ethiopian, and Egyptian art, that of the Hebrew people must next be examined. That they had sculptors and chasers, is evident; but it is not so certain that painting was practised. Though the cunning work of the curtains in Exodus means tapestry, and for any cunning work of the kind, designs coloured must have been executed; yet there is

<sup>1</sup> Col. Leake says there is a remnant of blue on the temple of Theseus; but that may be as applied to architecture. The question is, whether the great painters used it in their art. Pliny says no, and Quintilian confirms him by applying to them the expression *simplex color*. No colour is *simplex* where pure blue is used.

no proof in any part of the Bible that painting as an art was ever practised by them ; and even the designs alluded to, were exclusively applied for the purposes of religion. “ Moreover, thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, with blue, and purple, and scarlet ; with cherubim of cunning work shalt thou make them.” (Exodus xxvi. 1.) “ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah ; and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all *manner of workmanship.*” (Exod. xxxi. 1—5.) Yet when Solomon wanted artists, he sent to Tyre, which is presumptive evidence of a deficiency of skill at Jerusalem. No allusion is made to the existence of the art of painting amongst the Hebrews ; yet it is hardly possible to suppose a people working in stone, and silver, and gold, and timber, designing and weaving a cunning work of cherubims on curtains and borders for garments, and having been so long amongst the Egyptians, to have been ignorant of painting ; but it is the opinion of one of the greatest living authorities in the church, that the representation of any object by painting was not permitted to the Hebrews.

With respect to the painting of the Phœnicians, Persians, Indians, and Chinese, it was in the earliest ages, and has ever since been, miserable and wretched. Although the Indians and Persians have always been celebrated for their tapestry, yet it is more for the excellence of the material than the purity of their designs. You may know a tiger from an elephant, though scarcely from a monkey, in their

tapestry, shawls, and carpets ; but in their utter ignorance of the naked figure, their long, barbarous, and cumbersome garments, and their want of science, are so grossly palpable, that they have never been, and never will be, referred to by any nation as authority in design. In their coins, however, the ancient Phœnicians shewed more knowledge of the form than the Persians, the Chinese, or the Indians.

From the painting of these Eastern nations, we may now justifiably approach a people, whose origin, history, and science, have puzzled historians more than perhaps the Atlantes themselves. Who the Etruscans were nobody knows ; but all agree that they were not aborigines, and this is establishing something. Yet it can scarcely be questioned that in their most remote, as well as their more refined periods, they were indebted for their arts, their language, and their religion, principally to the Grecians. The time when the Etruscans had commercial relations with Egypt and Greece, is hardly known ;<sup>1</sup> but as their early style of art is a little Egyptian and their subjects Grecian, they were no doubt connected with both, even before the Greeks had settled in Italy. It is not yet decided where they came from, and who they were, and if one consults all who have written on the subject from Herodotus to M. Raoul-Rochette, he is likely to be as open to a new theory as when he began. Their early works prove nothing. These are like the early works of almost all barbarous nations. The gods of the Etruscans are, in point of art, the gods of the Peruvians, the Sandwich Islanders, or the Esquimaux. Idols are idols, in early nations all over the world ; and the bandy-legged Apollos, squinting Pans, and *Dii indigenetes*, sixteen heads high, of this mysterious people, would

<sup>1</sup> B. C. 1556.

do as well for any of the gods of the South Seas, as the early barbarians of the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> When commerce brought them in contact with Greece and Egypt, traces of the art of both nations become apparent ; but this is no evidence that they came exclusively from one nation or from the other.

Winkelman is a person of great genius, and always touches art as if he saw the whole ground. He divides Etruscan art into three epochs, Heyne into five ;<sup>2</sup> he goes to leading points, Heyne enters into details. The first epoch was gross ; the second exhibited traces of Greek or Pelasgic art ; the third had a taint of Ægyptian ; the fourth was better ; the fifth produced ideal beauty and Greek mythology ; and this completes the period till decay. Campania was colonized 801 B.C. ; but the Eubæans had founded Cuma 1550 B.C. This neighbourhood brought the Etruscans in contact with Greek art, when about the ninth or eleventh Olympiad Greek colonies were established in Sicily ; and the intercourse being reciprocal and complete, it cannot be wondered, that the more ignorant of the two nations became fascinated and inoculated by the superior one, and thus rendered Etruscan so like Greek art, that it has ever since produced doubt and confusion. ;

According to Pliny, the arrival of Demaratus with Cleantes from Corinth, first brought art into Etruria about 650 B.C. ; yet, he says, there were beautiful pictures at Ardea and Lanuvium, which were older than Rome, and Rome was founded 754 B.C. Heyne says, that before Rome was built, casting of metal, sculpture, and painting existed in Etruria anterior to any connection of the Etruscans with Greece ; according to Winkelman the Etruscans were advanced in

<sup>1</sup> See Gorius.

<sup>2</sup> See Heyne's Notes on Winkelman, vol. i.

art before the Greeks, and it was a tradition of the remote ages, that Dædalus flying from Minos settled in Etruria and first sowed the seeds of design. When Etruria became a Roman province, Marcus Flavius Flaccus besieged Volsinium, the etymological meaning of which is, "The town of artists," and brought away two thousand statues from that city alone. An able writer, in the "Newcastle Transactions" contends, that it is doubtful if the Etruscans had any art before the arrival of the Greeks.<sup>1</sup> No historian of this nation has reached us; their inscriptions are not yet thoroughly decyphered; and as the Romans destroyed every monument of surrounding nations, there is no fixing their antiquity. It is clear, however, that painting flourished in Italy before it did in Greece; such at least is the opinion of Tiraboschi.<sup>2</sup> Pliny says nothing about it before the 18th Olympiad in Greece, whereas in the 16th there were paintings in the above towns in Italy, and works too shewing great refinement; which the Romans admired in their days of splendour, and which their emperors wished to remove, surrounded as they were by the finest productions of Grecian art. Their civil and religious rites not being the same as the Egyptians, and there being no traces of embalming, it may thence be concluded that they were not of Egyptian origin.

All hopes of discovering any of their paintings, any important work which should give us evidence of their talents in art, were given up, till in 1760 Pacciaudi discovered at Tarquinia, tombs decorated with designs; and in 1837 fac-similes of pictural decorations of other tombs were exhibited in Lon-

<sup>1</sup> This is a most able article, and the reader is referred to it for more extensive information on the Etruscans.

<sup>2</sup> *Storia della Letteratura Italiana.*



don, with the monumental statues themselves, and in parts were extremely beautiful in taste, design, expression, and drapery. The extremities were correctly and sweetly drawn; and the expression and character of the head, which were very interesting, would not have disgraced any period of Greek or Italian design, though they would not have honoured the finest. It is impossible to judge of the colour of the Etruscan school from these specimens, or from the vases called Etruscan. Fresco, stucco, or distemper are adapted neither for depth nor for tone; oil or encaustic is the only vehicle fit for harmony, and oil or encaustic was never practised by them. With respect to the painted vases called Etruscan, because they are found in Etruria, we might just as well assert, if one discovered in the middle of Yorkshire, a mass of china, that it must be of English manufacture because it was found in Yorkshire. After the Greeks had settled in the south, their vases might be and no doubt were an article of commerce; of course they were imitated, but surely the design and origin are wholly Grecian, whatever the Etruscans might after long intercourse do in the way of imitation. The principles of design and proportion in these beautiful productions, are the same as in the finest works of Greek sculpture, with an occasional but trifling variation. Raffaele himself could not have exceeded the purity of form expressed by line, in drapery or figure. In the finest vases the artists seem to have been perfect masters of the figure, and to have gone right round with the stylus, till the contour of the part was completely expressed. Nor is there any thing wonderful in this, considering the manner in which Greek artists and manufacturers began, proceeded, and concluded their studies. According to Plato, a perfect mastery of the forms



of man and animal was the basis of all instruction in design.<sup>1</sup>

We have thus brought down the history of the art to a period, when our information, though imperfect, is more certain; but we can never sufficiently estimate the loss of all the ancient treatises on art, though we ought to be very grateful for what we possess in Plato and Aristotle, Pliny and Quintilian, and other ancient writers, Greek and Roman, down to the middle ages, and till the subject was taken up by Vasari and Lanzi. The continued existence of this glorious art, can always be proved, more or less subject of course, like every thing human, to those alternations of splendour and calamity, triumph and misfortune, which are the lot of every thing here below.

The superiority of the Greeks in art is always attributed to the secondary causes of climate and government, forgetting the one important requisite, without which the influence of the most genial climate, or the patronage of the most perfect government could avail little; we mean natural and inherent genius. If the Athenians, the Rhodians, the Corinthians, and the Sicyonians owed their excellence in art to the climate, why did not the same climate produce equal perfection in the Spartans and Arcadians? If climate be the secret, why are not all people under the same latitude equally gifted and equally refined? Climate may be more or less favourable to intellectual development, but is never the cause of its existence. Government may elicit genius by fostering and reward, but can never create it. All the la-

<sup>1</sup> See a beautiful passage *De Legibus*, lib. ii. p. 669.—If every scholar would mark and transcribe every passage relating to art, a code might soon be made out.

mentation about the climate of England, Scotland, or Flanders, did not prevent Hogarth's appearance in the first, Wilkie's in the second, or Rubens' in the last of these countries ; nor could all the beauty of climate in Greece or Italy, ever have made Mengs a Raffaele, or David the Titian of modern times. It would be absurd to deny altogether the influence of climate in the extremes. It is not impossible but that genius might melt to indolence under the line, or freeze to apathy within the arctic circle ; but even genius there would assert its superiority in something or in some way. What we contend for is, that Winkelman's theory of limiting the gifts of God, intellectual or corporeal, to latitude or longitude, is not borne out by facts, the great test of all theoretical principles.

The Greeks were idolaters, and their love of beauty was a principle of their religion. The more beautiful a face or form could be rendered in painting or sculpture, the better chance had the artist of the blessing of the gods here, and their immortal rewards hereafter. As beauty was so much prized by this highly-endowed people, those who were gifted with it became ambitious of making it known to great artists, and by them to the world. Artists fixed the fame of beauty in man or woman, and even children who gave promise of being beautiful were allowed to contest for a prize, and the child who won it had a statue erected to him. Many people were complimented by being named from the beauty of any particular part, and Winkelman quotes an instance, where one was called *Χαριτοβλεφαρος* that is, "having eyelids where the graces sat." There were games instituted near the river Alphæus, where prizes were adjudged to the most beautiful ; and the Lacedæmonian women in their bed-rooms kept continually before their eyes the finest statues. Still, this

admiration of beauty was but a secondary cause ; for though the Lacedæmonians showed this love of beauty, they did not produce great artists. The Greeks had a strong sensibility to beauty and an intense acuteness of understanding. Every artist was a philosopher, and every philosopher relished art, and understood it. The artists began by the study of geometry and of form ; they analyzed the peculiarities of the form of man, by contrasting it with that of the brutes, and they settled the principles of beauty in that form and figure. The philosophers recommended to all classes the study of art, as a refined mode of elevating their perception of beauty ; and the government seconded the recommendation of the philosophers. The priests found the religious feeling rendered more acute by painting and sculpture ; and the authorities discovered, that the emotions of patriotism were doubled by the commemoration of great national events, in temples and in public halls. Now, add climate as adapted for such productions and their preservation, and genius, the gift of God, as the first cause, and no one surely need wonder that all these causes mutually acting on each other produced the miracles of perfection in art, which the world has gazed at ever since with an incredulous and bewildered astonishment.

The passion for the beautiful in poetry, painting, music, and nature, led them to abhor the bloody amusements of the Romans. To contest for glory by pictures, poems, or music, to race for the prize of swiftness, or wrestle for the crown of strength, were the innocent and delightful objects of their Olympic games ; and during those noble commemorations, war ceased, and all Greece assembled in happiness and joy. Even the harsh Spartans signed a truce of fifty days with the Messenians, that they might keep a fête

in honour of Hyacinthus. The greatest men disdained not these contests. Plato appeared amongst the wrestlers at Corinth, and Pythagoras carried off the prize at Elis. What must have been the effect of all this upon a people of strong susceptibilities and of high natural genius?

Consider the respect which must have been paid to great artists, when such a man as Socrates pronounced them the only wise men. Æsop took the greatest pleasure in lounging in their painting-rooms; Marcus Aurelius took lessons in philosophy from an artist, and always said that the latter first taught him to distinguish the true from the false; and when Paulus Æmilius sent to the Athenians for one of their ablest philosophers to educate his children, they selected Metrodorus the painter, and, let it be remembered, that amongst the children placed under *his* care, was one of the Scipios. What must have been the effect on the rising youth of Greece when the Amphictyonic council decreed that Polygnotus, their greatest monumental painter, should be maintained at the public expense wherever he went, as a mark of the national admiration for his greatest work, the Hall at Delphi. The glory and the fortune of a great painter did not depend, as now, upon the caprice of individuals; he was the property of the nation; he was employed by countries and by cities; and his rewards were considered as a just portion of the national expenditure. The educated and the high-born were brought up with a conviction of the propriety and justice of this principle; and when they became members of the government, considered this as useful a method of public expenditure, as squandering thousands on matters merely diplomatic, or in vain shows, mummings, and pageants. And such will yet be the system of our own country, when the

people become fully instructed, and are made sensible of the moral and commercial influence of painting.

When we reflect upon the money spent in England by the government, and the consequences which so often attend that expenditure, and when we find in Greece the different results of the same interference on the part of the state, and that the works there produced have been canons of beauty to the world ever since ; it is natural to inquire, what was the system by means of which genius was so successfully rewarded ? The secondary causes must have been, the competence of the tribunals to which poets, painters, musicians, sculptors, historians, wrestlers, boxers, and philosophers with such confidence appealed. It must have been the taste and knowledge of the members which composed the judgment-boards, and their sincere conviction of the importance of their office. One has only to sift for a moment the nature of their greatest tribunal, that of the Olympian games ; one has only to reflect on the deep feeling, the solemn sincerity, the awful piety of their conviction, that what they had to do involved the future prospects of the rising youth of Greece, and that on their moral honesty depended the glory of their country, and that of its painters, sculptors, architects, philosophers, poets, and heroes. Before proceeding to detail the rise and progress of Greek art, and Greek artists, as the painting of every nation is connected with its civil, religious, and scientific institutions, (though more must always depend on highly-gifted individual effort to advance the knowledge of mankind, than any given assemblage of inferior individuals ;) a rapid examination of the principles which guided the decision of one of their most important tribunals, composed of the greatest men the world has seen, ought to form a portion of every history of the art.



Aristotle in his *Politics*,<sup>1</sup> as quoted by Mr. Hamilton in his pamphlet on the Houses of Parliament, observes: "All were taught *γραμματα* or literature, gymnastics, and music, and many *την γραφικην*, or the *art of design*, as being abundantly useful for the purposes of life, but mainly because it enables us to appreciate the merits of distinguished artists, and carries us to the contemplation of *real beauty*; as letters, which are the elements of calculation, terminate in the contemplation of truth." A people thus educated, to understand the basis of beauty in art, and to believe that their decisions, when they became judges of genius, involved their own intellectual taste and repute, and who gave their decisions in the presence of kings, philosophers, and people, were as little likely to be biassed by unjust predeliction as human nature could be; though, of course, in the corrupt times of Nero and the emperors, great abuses took place. But in the Marathonian period, if ever partiality was banished from human honours, it was banished from the Olympic games, in those immortal days of glory and patriotism. At this extraordinary assemblage, kings entered the lists, and nations respected the judgment, or if they refused to abide by the decision of a just tribunal, they were excluded by vote till they paid the fine and acknowledged their error. And what was the result? The highest honours were obtained in these contests, because every one gifted in art, poetry, music, or physical strength, knew that if he deserved the olive-crown, no partiality, no nephew of the judge's sister, or first cousin of the judge's wife, would deprive him of his due. Every being did his best, and if that *best* failed, he had a consoling conscientious conviction that he had been honourably, and honestly,

<sup>1</sup> Lib. viii. c. 31.



and nobly beaten by a better. It is astonishing, if once entire confidence exist between judge and competitor, to what a degree this confidence affects both ; what a spring it gives to mind and body, and how honestly every thing is done : And if confidence be, from repeated experience, withheld, it is wonderful how half the faculties of the mind, and the powers of the body and soul, sink under the impression. Napoleon used to say, “ that if the moral feeling of an army was in favour of a campaign, it was equal to 40,000 men.” If moral confidence be lost in such cases, disgust is generated, and apathy, indifference, and failure are the result.

In order to understand the Greek character thoroughly, the system of excitement that was worked on, and the materials that were used to rouse the energies of competitors, it will conduce to the understanding of the secondary causes of their perfection, if the nature of the Olympic games be examined.<sup>1</sup> They are universally acknowledged to have subsisted before the rise of chronological dates and records ; and the record of the Olympic conquerors after their restoration, is the first known chronological date. Pausanias says they were celebrated every five years, that is, they were celebrated on the fifth year after the fourth had passed ; and Sir Isaac Newton is of opinion that they were originally instituted in celebration of victories. Why the Olympic games had always the preference, there is no knowing ; but the grand statue of Jupiter at Elis, must no doubt have had considerable influence.

The privilege of presiding at the Olympic games was attended with such dignity and power, that the Eleans who had been in possession of it from the earliest times, were more than once obliged to maintain their right by force of

<sup>1</sup> See West's *Pindar*.

arms. After various disputes about the number of presidents or hellenadicks, they remained at the original number of ten; and Pausanias says, that for ten months preceding the games, they dwelt together in a house appointed for them, and called from them, hellanodiceum. By the most scrupulous attention, they did every thing to qualify themselves for being deservedly the judges of *all Greece*; to which end they were patiently instructed by officers called guardians of the laws, and they attended every day in the gymnasium, upon the preparatory exercises of all those who were admitted as candidates, and who entered their names also ten months before, and exercised during a part, not the whole, of this time, in preparing themselves for the combat. Being exposed to the severest scrutiny, the judges had by these means frequent opportunities of trying the skill of the combatants, and also of exercising their own judgment; and both prepared themselves for the praise or censure of an awful tribunal, and a numerous assembly, whose censure could only be escaped by the most exact impartiality on the part of the judges, and the most sincere and earnest efforts for superiority on that of the competitors. In addition, the judges swore a solemn oath before the statue of Jupiter, upon their finishing the examination, to act according to the strictest equity; and to all these precautions against human frailty, liberty of appeal to the senate at Elis was allowed to any one who felt aggrieved. The judges had also the power of excommunicating whole nations. Once an Athenian found guilty of corruption was fined, and refused to pay. The Athenians sanctioned his refusal, and were instantly excluded from all the games, till they repented and paid the penalty. When the Lacedæmonians were impertinent, other nations took up arms,

and compelled them to submission. Such power had a wonderful effect on all the nations of Greece.

As the time approached, the candidates were rigorously examined as to their virtuous descent, and their own moral life ; and when they passed in public review down the stadium, a herald demanded with a loud voice, " Is there any one who can accuse this man of any crime ? is he a robber ? is he a slave ? is he wicked or in any way depraved ?" Themistocles once stood up at the ceremony and objected to Hiero, king of Syracuse, because he was a *tyrant*, a name odious to the democracies of Greece ; and there could not be a stronger evidence of their utter detestation of the name, than refusing to admit a king to contend because he was a tyrant ; thus placing him upon a level with a slave, who could not by law be admitted. The candidates having passed in public review with honour, were then sworn, that they had done all which was required by law ; and marching to the stadium, attended by their friends, connexions, and families, who encouraged them to do their best, and appealed to the gods to smile on their exertions, they were left for the fight. And being thus thought worthy of the contest, even defeat was considered by them as an evidence of their honour. The olive crowns and palm branches were placed before their eyes on beautiful tripods, to excite their utmost exertions, and when victorious it was announced by proclamation ; they were crowned by the heralds, and then led along, preceded by trumpets, their names being shouted aloud throughout the vast assembly ; and on their return to their native city, they entered through a breach in the wall, drawn in a chariot. And such was the high feeling engendered by these judicious excitements, that

even Alexander himself was refused permission to contend, because he was a barbarian, nor was he allowed until he had proved his ancient descent at Argolis.<sup>1</sup> “In the republic of the fine arts,” says the catalogue to the designs for a National Gallery, “competition is the great source of excellence; but so to frame institutions, and invite competition as to secure all the attainable talent, and so to form a tribunal as to derive all benefit for the public, and to do justice to the competitor, have been matters of great difficulty in all ages and all countries.”

The whole history of ancient art shews the estimation in which the unsophisticated judgment of the public was held. Aristotle<sup>2</sup> says, “The multitude is the surest judge of the productions of art;” “If you do not get the applause of the public,” says some one else, “what celebrity can you attain?” and Cicero<sup>3</sup> makes the public the supreme judge. Thus then, no one ought to wonder at the perfection of Greek genius in every thing, stimulated as it was by these secondary causes, and the one acting upon the other, in a climate adapted in every way for comfort, for health, and for convenience. The Greeks were men like ourselves, not larger as their arms prove, and not handsomer, for there exist as fine forms in either sex, in Great Britain, as ever graced the atelier of Zeuxis; indeed Cicero complains of the plainness of the Athenians. When genius and secondary causes unite, as they sometimes do, then such men as Pericles and Alexander, and Polygnotus, Zeuxis, and Apelles, are the result; for all the Olympic games, and Greek tribunals, could never have made Hudson Apelles, nor Caligula the benevolent Howard. “If any

<sup>1</sup> See *Notes on West's Pindar*.

<sup>2</sup> *De Republica*, iii. c. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *De Oratore*, c. 49.

thing were wanting," says Flaxman, "to convince us of the high estimation painting was held in by the Greeks, the facts alone, viz. that Plato studied it, and Socrates was a sculptor by profession, are enough. But nothing is wanting."

In ancient painting, we certainly owe more to Pliny than to any other author; though in point of exquisite tact for hitting at once the characters of the great geniuses in art, he is not to be compared to Quintilian. There is more discrimination in the short account Quintilian gives of the painters and sculptors, than in all the delightful connoisseur chit-chat for which Pliny must ever be the leading favourite. Yet certainly his gossip and anecdotes are sometimes underrated by learned critics; for in two instances of gossip, about the partridges and grapes of Zeuxis and Protogenes, and the contest of Apelles and Protogenes very deep principles of Greek form and Greek imitation may be settled. Painting is said by Pliny to have existed before the foundation of Rome in Italy, as illustrated by designs on the walls at Ardea, Lanuvium, and Cœre. This is always mentioned with a sort of doubt by antiquarians, who suspect that to the arrival of Demaratus from Corinth, the father of Tarquin, king of Rome, Italy owes her first knowledge of painting; but it has been shewn that this cannot be so, if pictures were executed in Italy before Rome was founded. Pliny sneers at the Egyptians for boasting of the antiquity of their painting; whereas the Greeks equally deserve a sneer for believing that they had invented design.

The Greeks painted tabular pictures on wood, and mural pictures on walls. The materials were either encaustic or wax painting, and distemper or glue-painting. In encaustic on wood, they painted with a metal point called *sty-*



*lus* ; in distemper they painted with brushes, and in encaustic on walls they also used brushes. Tabular pictures were prepared with a ground of wax, and the composition was drawn in with a *stylus* or point as we draw upon an etching ground with a needle. At a sale of antiquities in London there was a regular Greek tablet with a wax ground, a stylus attached to it as boys hang slate-pencils to their slates, and a sentence of Greek actually half-cut. The word *γραφω* being used for painting, design, or writing, makes the instrument the same in either case. This tablet was like a slate ; the middle had been planed smooth, and the frame was left round it. The progress of the Greeks is very interesting, and shews how the mind gradually advances to the imitation of reality, and rests impatiently on mere outline, as a representation of nature. After a certain time, the early artists, when they had drawn an outline, ventured to colour it inside with black. This mode of imitation was called *σκιαγραφια*, and the paintings *σκιαγραμματα*, or skiagrams, from *σκια* shade, and *γραφω* to draw. Our black profiles and whole figures seen in shop windows, are the skiagrams of the ancient Greeks. This was hailed as a great step, and the painter who could fill up a face or a figure with black was regarded as a man eminent in art. After a little came the genius with more extended views, who invented the *μονογραμμα* or monogram from *μονος* only, and *γραφω*, to draw ; that is, to define *by line only*, an outline without a shade. Next came the man who had the nerve to try a *positive colour*. Pliny has preserved his name, Cleophrastus of Corinth ; he ground up a red brick,<sup>1</sup> and therefore the Greeks claimed the invention of colour, although the Chaldæans had paint-

<sup>1</sup> *Testa, ut ferunt, trita, Plin. lib. xxxv.*



ed men red on the walls of Babylon, and so had the Egyptians on their tombs, nearly a thousand years before them. This discovery was called *μονοχρωμα*, or monochrom, single-coloured, from *μονος* alone and *χρωμα* colour, and this was their first attempt at imitating flesh.<sup>1</sup> Next came the white ground (the *gesso* of the Italians and lime and plaster of the Egyptians) covered with wax. From one colour, naturally enough came the others; for if brick produced red, earths, burned or natural, would produce other colours, and polychrom, from *πολυς* many, and *χρωμα* colour, was formed.

The art having now discovered its materials, soon advanced steadily and gloriously to excellence. "How long the brush assisted only the cestrum, and when it superseded it," says Fuzeli,<sup>2</sup> "cannot be ascertained; it cannot be proved, that it ever entirely superseded it, and there is every reason to believe they were always combined." It has been contested that painting was not known in Homer's time, because he speaks not of art; but what would be said of any man who argued that painting was not known in Milton's time, because *he* did not speak of it. Homer speaks of *painting ships*, and Milton alludes to "the *painted stoa*;" but colouring and design must have been known from the shield of Achilles, and the tapestries of Helen and Andromache, if the walls of Thebes and those of Babylon, had not settled the question. Troy was taken 1184 before Christ; but painting flourished in Egypt 1900 years before our era, that is, 716 years before Troy was taken, and 993 years before the era of Homer.

The nature of distemper and encaustic painting amongst the Greeks involves one or two questions interesting to

<sup>1</sup> *Μονοχρωματιν* dictum. *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Fuzeli, Lecture first.

artists. Their distemper was our tempera, and consisted in dissolving colour in water, and mixing it with glue; and though in Pliny, glue is only mentioned once, and that in conjunction with (*tectores*) plasterers, it is evidently to be inferred from the brushes used in its practice, that tempera intensely varnished was the general practice of the ~~fabulous~~ painters, and encaustics the exception. On all encaustic pictures, the Greeks put (*ἐνεκαυσεν*) "burnt in;" and what justified them in doing so? Merely the general application of fire to melt wax, or a particular mode of practice. Was the cestrum or stylus heated, whilst finishing the work, after the wax had been laid on? or was any actual heat applied to amalgamate the colour in the conclusion, which justified such a term? or was the wax actually melted and used whilst boiling? Pliny says, that there were certain colours which would not stand without varnish; and that after they were laid on walls and dry, they were varnished with a mixture of warm punic wax and oil. Every Greek artist had his chafing-dish or *καυτηριον*; and when the varnish was dry, it was heated by fire from the chafing-dish "usque ad sudorem," *until it sweated*, when it was rubbed with wax candles, and polished with white napkins. This method the Greeks called *καυσις*<sup>1</sup> or the burning mode; and why might it not be applied as well to encaustic pictures, when finished either on wood, copper, walls, or stone, thus harmonizing and judiciously amalgamating fierce execution or distinct touches, and authorising the word *ἐνεκαυσεν* being put after the artist's name?

All the artists in Europe know well how often they use a

<sup>1</sup> It is clear that *fire* was always an important part in an encaustic painting, because Philiscus painted a painter's room (atelier) with a little boy *blowing the fire*. Pliny, xxxv.

vehicle<sup>1</sup> for a varnish, and a varnish for a vehicle in practice; and hence it is too absurd to doubt for a moment, that any Greek painter who had once used oil and wax as a varnish, would not use it as a vehicle at the first opportunity. Pliny infers, that “*ceris pingere*,” to paint with waxes (coloured) and “*picturam inurere*,” to burn in the picture, were *the same methods*. “There were anciently,” he adds, “two methods, one *cerâ*, with wax, and another on ivory with a *cestrum*; then came a third, boiling the wax and painting ships at once with it, which was a lasting mode, so that neither sea, wind, nor sun destroyed it.” It appears from another passage, that the ships were painted in the same way<sup>2</sup> as pictures which were burnt in. “Waxes are tinted with these colours for pictures which are burnt in; a different manner of painting from that employed on walls, but like that (of waxes tinted) employed for painting ships.” Were tinted waxes applied hot? From this it may be inferred that they were.

Encaustic painting may be divided into four methods: 1st, mixing the colours with wax, and thinning them at the moment of painting with a liquid; 2d, placing wax in colours on the ivory, distinctly like mosaic, and uniting them by working them over with a heated *cestrum*; 3d, boiling the wax and using it hot; and, 4thly, softening the whole picture after completion, by heating it with a chaffing-dish or cauterium. Both Pliny and Vitruvius describe this last method of varnishing; and it is curious to contrast their re-

<sup>1</sup> Vehicle, as distinct from varnish, means the liquid you paint with; varnish, the liquid you put over the work, when done, to preserve it.

<sup>2</sup> “*Ceræ tinguntur iisdem coloribus, ad eas picturas, quæ inuruntur; alieno parietibus genere, sed classibus familiari.*”

lative descriptions. Pliny is rapid, careless, general, desultory, as if talking at a party; Vitruvius, accurate, mathematical, careful, and architectural, as if every word was a brick, that must be poised and balanced. Pliny says you must liquefy punic wax with oil,<sup>1</sup> and rub it with a candle and napkins. Vitruvius says, after your wall is dry and smooth, liquefy punic wax, *paulo*, a little by fire, then *temper* it with oil. In Pliny the *paulo* is left out, and so is the fire; but Vitruvius guides you to the *degree*, which is every thing in the practice of the art of painting. The *paulo*, therefore, is invaluable; do not boil, but heat your wax, then liquefy it, then varnish, then when dry heat it with a chaffing-dish and rub it smooth. To artists this practice is beautiful, and though oil-painting was supposed to be unknown to the Greeks, this was very near the point, and if used by Polygnotus at Delphi or Thespiæ, would have justified the term *burnt in*, without the use of the cestrum.

It is not settled by Pliny who first discovered encaustic painting; it is not known, he says, whether Aristides may have invented it, or Praxiteles completed it. But there existed on the walls encaustic paintings by the old painters Polygnotus and Nicanor; Lysippus at Ægina put his name to his tabular works with *ἐνκαυσεν*; Pamphilus the great master of Pausias, did not practise it exclusively; and Pausias was the first in this art. Pausias, Pliny adds, repaired the walls of Thespiæ, painted by Polygnotus, but being obliged to use the brush, failed, because he handled an instrument which he was not accustomed to. It appears, however, that the walls of Thespiæ were painted in encaustic by Polygnotus, and with the brush; or Pausias, the greatest encaustic painter, would not

<sup>1</sup> That Reynolds introduced wax into British art from this passage, there is no doubt.

have been employed to repair them, nor would he have gone out of the way to use the brush, if Polygnotus had used the cestrum. But Pausias failed, because the brush was not his instrument; therefore encaustic on walls was not worked with the cestrum, as it was on tablets, and the burning in on tablets was not of the same nature as that on walls. That the brush and the cestrum were totally different in practice there is no doubt; but that there was ever a time when the brush was not used in painting is absurd; and Pliny is evidently wrong in saying it was the last method.

It stands to reason that to paint ships was the earliest necessity of navigation. The ark was pitched inside and outside (Gen. vii. 14). Pitch melted is in fact like wax or oil; and how was it to be equally spread over so vast a surface except by brushes? In fact, amongst the Egyptian antiquities imported of late years, brushes have been abundant. Thus the Greeks painted on walls, wood, stone, ivory, copper, and canvass; on walls it was *mural painting*, and on either of the other materials, *tabular painting*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At this moment there is a dispute raging in France and Germany whether tabular painting was or was not the principal practice of the ancients, and whether mural painting was ever practised to any great extent. Letronne says cloth was not used *anciently* to paint on, and that Pliny thinks the man mad who painted Nero on cloth one hundred and twenty feet high; but the madness insinuated does not apply to the *cloth or canvass*, but to the *absurdity* of a portrait one hundred and twenty feet high in cloth. Why should canvass be only *once* used in antiquity, and never before or after till the middle ages? Is this likely? As a curious specimen of the blind violence of party, the friends of one of the combatants, Letronne, have written him from Athens, that in the temple of Theseus they have discovered by candle-light round the upper part of the wall, *actual contours* of the works of Polygnotus *cut in on the plaster with the cestrum*, the colours having been picked out by the early Christians; thus proving that Letronne is decidedly right as to his theory of painting on walls. Yet



There is another question which remains to be settled before touching on the great artists and their works : Did the Greeks paint in fresco ? The belief has been that they did. Vasari affirms it ; but Letronne certainly establishes the suspicion that they did not, except in a few ornamental parts of architecture, and that stucco was more in practice. In fresco the colours are placed on wet mortar, and become a part of it. In stucco the colours do not become a part, and can be separated. Certain colours are destroyed by contact with lime, and yet those colours which fresco would have ruined, *are always found on ancient painted walls.* Letronne says, that there does not exist a well authenticated evidence of fresco, except as mere ornament in ceilings.

Having thus laid before the reader the different modes of Greek practice, without which no subsequent account of their arts or artists would have been intelligible, it is time to say something of the artists themselves, who practised these various modes of imitating nature. Of their different methods, their white grounds descended to them from the

would it be believed, that the friends of his opponent, Raoul-Rochette, have also written him that they *do not see a single contour cut in*, but that they have discovered a *sinking-in* of the plaster as if fitted to receive tabular works which were let into the walls ; and thus the theory of Raoul-Rochette, viz. that pictures were scarcely ever painted on walls, but nearly always on wood, *is right*, whilst the former gentlemen assert that there are contours on the walls. But the theory of M. Letronne *is also right* ; for the ancients painted on walls as well as wood ; and though Pliny says that the greatest glory was obtained by easel pictures, he affirms that there were also pictures on walls, because in giving one of his reasons for preferring tabular pictures, he says pictures on walls cannot be saved in case of fire, (*ex incendiis rari non possunt*), and that he prefers tabular pictures. If pictures had not been painted on walls as well as on wood, how could he have illustrated his preference ?



eastern nations, and have come to us through the middle ages. Some of their colours we use now, and for some we have substitutes as good. If their principles were as easily attainable as their colours, we should have very little to desire.

In the earliest state of Greek art, Philocles from Egypt, and Cleanthes from Corinth, were the inventors of outline, and Ardices from Corinth, and Telephanes from Sicyon, the first who put it in practice, without any colour. To this early period may be applied the accusation of Ælian,<sup>1</sup> that the artists were obliged to write underneath their wretched illustrations, "This is a bull, this is a horse, this is a tree." The next were single-colour painters, or monochromatists, as Hygiomon and others. Now the sexes began to be distinguished, when Cimon the Cleonean had energy to attempt the imitation of every thing. He it was who invented foreshortening, and drawing things at an angle.<sup>2</sup> He it was who had courage to vary the characters and forms of heads, to

<sup>1</sup> Ælian, lib. x. chap. xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Catagrapha invenit, hoc est, obliquas imagines et varie formare voltus, respicientesque, suspicientes vel despicientes.* Fuzeli says *catagrapha* means *profiles*; but how could he *invent* profiles when *profiles* are the characteristics of the *earliest* art? At first all art is profile; but Cimon was a reformer. To draw downwards he invented oblique views, and varied the views of the head and face, looking behind, looking up, and looking down. Fuzeli says *catagrapha* means profile; but profiles are not oblique representations but sections of the figure and face, in the same sense as architectural sections, that is, equal halves. The "obliquæ imagines," are *angular views*, seeing things at an angle; the passage is directly illustrated by the circumstances, that he made his heads looking behind, &c.; and how can a head looking behind be a *profile*? In some places it may mean so; in Pausanias, *κατα* in radical meaning is *downwards*, as if the eye looked at the top of the head to the feet, which is *foreshortening*.

make them looking up, looking down, and looking behind; he articulated his joints, shewed the veins and muscles, and gave undulation and folds to his draperies. Panænus, Phidias's brother, painted the shield of Minerva at Elis, and also the battle of Marathon; and so much had the knowledge of colour and art advanced, that portraits of the great leaders, Miltiades, Callimachus, and Cynegyras, on the part of the Greeks, and of Datis and Artaphernes, on that of the barbarians, were introduced, and known by the spectators. It was at this period that the glorious contests for victory in art were begun at Corinth and Delphi; and Panænus was conquered by Timagoras of Chalcis, who commemorated his victory by a poem; "though I doubt not," says Pliny, "there is some chronological error."

The Greek national and monumental painter Polygnotus, flourished at this period or before it. He seems to have been really a great man, and to have possessed a mighty soul. He was born in Thasos, an island in the Ægean Sea; and his works seem all to have been national, votive offerings of cities and his country. He was worthy of the finest period of Greece, and met his noble patrons by a suitable return; he was one of those beings who are born for the time or beyond it, and of whom the time is in want, or for whom it is not enough advanced. He first clothed lovely women in light and floating draperies, adorned their beautiful heads with rich turbans, and thus advanced the art immensely. In expression of face he ventured to make the mouth of beauty smile, and thus softened, by shewing the teeth, the ancient rigidity of his predecessors. He painted gratuitously the Hall at Delphi, and the Portico at Athens, called Ποικιλη, thus offering a contrast to Micon who was paid. Such conduct was immediately judged worthy to be commemorated

by the highest authority in Greece, the Amphictyonic Council, who ordered that Polygnotus should henceforth be maintained at the expence of Greece. Pliny has certainly not said enough of Polygnotus, whose great work at Delphi, described by Pausanias, proves him to have had colour in a high degree, imagination in the highest, and all which, according to Aristotle, forms the most important requisite in the language of painting. His work at Delphi was executed by order of the Cnidians, who had a treasure there, and had also built a stadium. Besides this building, they employed Polygnotus to adorn the great Hall, leaving him the choice of subjects ; and as Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, was murdered and had a tomb near the spot, these subjects related to the Trojan war.

It is supposed that because Pausanias describes one thing as above another, composition was little known, and that there were several subjects in one plane. But any one might describe the Cartoons at Hampton Court in the same way, and make a reader, who had never seen them, believe that one figure was above another, and several subjects too. Might not one say, “*Above* Pythagoras in Raffaele’s *School of Athens*, is Alcibiades listening to Socrates ;” but because they are *above* one another, that is no proof that they do not *retire*. Aristotle settles his high rank better than Pliny or Quintilian. “Polygnotus,” says he, “made men *better* than they are, Pauson worse than they are, and Dionysius the same as they are.”<sup>1</sup> Polygnotus, therefore, expressed the leading points of the species man, and cleared the accidental from the superfluous. Cimabue did not do this, nor Masaccio, nor Giotto ; but Raffaele and Michel Angelo did ;

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*.

and when this is done, in painting or sculpture, the component parts of art must be equally advanced. Besides, when did Polygnotus flourish? Between the 84th and 90th Olympiad. The Parthenon must have been built; the beauties of Phidias's immortal hand must have been executed, such as we see them in the Theseus, Ilyssus, metopes and friese of the Elgin marbles. And could any painter be a Goth in composition, when such knowledge of the art is visible in these perfect wonders? Polygnotus put the names to many of his figures; Annibale Caracci put "genus unde Latinum" to Venus and Anchises; Raffaello gilded his glories; but what argument is that against the genius of either? The power of Polygnotus in painting the dæmon Eurynome, with a skin the colour of a blue-bottle fly, shews the truth of his imagination, as well as his power of observation and imitation. Polygnotus was a great genius, worthy of his age; and the "simplex color," applied by Quintilian to his works, only proves the purity of his taste in using it.<sup>1</sup>

Simplicity is not barbarism, any more than gorgeousness is true taste. About the 90th Olympiad the light began to dawn and to give promise of a glorious sunrise. Aglaophon, Cephissodonus, Phrylus, and Evenor, the father of Parrhasius, and preceptor of the greatest painters, appeared. These were all celebrated in their day; but one of the most

<sup>1</sup> Hardouin's *Pliny*, lib. xii. c. 10, p. 893. Clari Pictores fuisse dicuntur Polygnotus, atque Aglaophon; quorum *simplex color* tam sui studiosus adhuc habet," etc. Now the *simplex color* of Polygnotus and Aglaophon was not *one colour*, like monochroms, but modesty in the arrangement of the *three* colours, red, yellow, and black, without blue. How then could the monochrom apply to Polygnotus, whose works at Thespiæ, Delphi, and the Poikile at Athens, were painted in all the variety these three colours could produce, and not confined to *one colour*?

important reformers was Apollodorus the Athenian, who flourished in the 93d Olympiad. He was the first, according to Pliny, who expressed the *species*; and he was also the first who did honour to the glory of the pencil. But, after Phidias, Pannœnus, Micon, and Polygnotus, one is inclined to question whether he was the first who expressed the species. Phidias, in the opinion of the ancients, was the greatest artist in sculpture. Plato says that Phidias was "skilled in beauty;" but to be skilful in beauty, argues the power of expressing the species, and a perfect knowledge of the construction; for beauty is the last operation, and is based upon the first. How then Apollodorus could have expressed the species better than Phidias or Polygnotus, it would perhaps have puzzled Pliny to explain. However, let us take what the gods have spared, and be grateful. "His, is the adoring priest," says Pliny, "and Ajax defying the lightning at Pergamus; nor was any tablet worth looking at before." That may be. The previous works were monumental, national, or mural, painted with brushes, and bold in execution. Tabular painting may have been a more delicate workmanship; but it is not to be compared with the true epic, any more than the highly-wrought easel pictures of Raffaele, are to be compared with his frescos.

"The doors," says Pliny, "that Apollodorus had opened, Zeuxis boldly marched through, about the 95th Olympiad; daring every thing the pencil could do, and carrying it to the greatest glory." Some place him in the 89th Olympiad; but this is a mistake. Demophilus or Naseas was his master. Apollodorus became envious of Zeuxis, because the latter improved upon the style he had introduced, and wrote a lampoon. Zeuxis became very rich, grew very haughty, and always appeared at the Olympic games in a purple robe,



with his name in gold letters on the border. So high was his opinion of his own pictures, that, thinking no money could equal their value, he gave them away. From this feeling, he presented an Alcmena to the Agrigentines, and a Pan to Archelaus; he also painted a Penelope, in which her moral beauty of character was visible, and an athlete, so much to his own delight, that he wrote underneath, "It is easier to criticise than to execute." His great works were Jupiter and all the gods, and Hercules strangling the serpents. He was censured for large heads and violent markings, but otherwise he was strictly correct. Pliny varies his history with current stories, and we can almost get at the principles of Greek art from them as well as from the account of the art itself. Current stories and proverbs should never be disregarded; for, if not true, they may be taken as inventions characteristic of the parties, or they would never have been believed. The Agrigentines, says Pliny, ordered a picture for a temple of Juno Lucinia, and they allowed the painter to select the finest girls as models. Cicero<sup>1</sup> says it was the Crotoniates who employed him; and as Zeuxis always studied nature, the most beautiful girls were ordered by government to come to him, and having selected five, he then painted his Helen. Zeuxis made his sketches in black and white (*pinxit et monochromata ex albo*) or of a single colour heightened by white. His contemporaries and rivals were Timanthes, Androcydes, Eupompus, and Parrhasius. The contest of the last with Zeuxis, in which the one deceived the birds by grapes, and Parrhasius Zeuxis himself by his curtain, contains the great principle of Greek art, viz. *That the most perfect imitation of reality was not incompatible with the highest style.* Antiquaries are dis-

<sup>1</sup> De Invent. lib. 2. cap. x.



posed to laugh at these stories as beneath the dignity of belief; but artists know well enough, that, so far from being unworthy of credit, all the stories of Pliny and Ælian tend more or less to illustrate a principle. Zeuxis painted a boy and grapes, and the birds flew at the fruit; but his rival observed that, if the boy had been equal to the grapes, the birds would have been frightened. Zeuxis was a great painter and discovered the principles of light and shadow.

After Zeuxis came Parrhasius, "liquidis ille coloribus,"<sup>1</sup> who was born at Ephesus, and celebrated for great excellence. He first gave correct proportions to painting; airs to the head, elegance to the hair, and beauty to the countenance. By the acknowledgment of all artists, the manner in which he *lost* the contours of his forms, was exquisite. Many people can execute the parts of which the middle of things is composed; but few can finish the boundaries of objects as if the substance was round, and did not end with the contour which defined it; thus giving one an idea as if something was concealed, and exciting the imagination to conceive what the eye did not see. This excellence Xenocrates, and Antigonus, who wrote on painting, conceded to Parrhasius; and not this excellence alone, but also many others. The best idea that can be given to the moderns of the works of Parrhasius, is by referring them to the pictures of Corregio, of which this is the great excellence. Parrhasius appears also to have had the same defect; for he softened the centres of his figures, and gave them too much pulpiness for the heroic. There remained, in Pliny's time, sketches of subjects, and of hands and feet, from which artists learned a great deal. He contrived in a picture to

<sup>1</sup> Horace.

paint the people of Athens, and to give a true idea of their variable character; humble yet vain-glorious, timid yet ferocious;—and all these contrasts he expressed with great power. But Parrhasius disgraced his genius by yielding to what Johnson calls “the frigid villany of studied lewdness,” and sacrificed his noble art to pander to the beastly appetites of the debauched; in fact, Tiberius kept one of his licentious pictures in his bed-room, namely, that of Meleager and Atalanta. But whatever may have been the habits of antiquity, and however indecencies may have been connected with religion, it is clear the greatest men did not approve of such prostitution of talent. Aristotle censures the practice, and warns tutors to guard their pupils from such corruptions.

Timanthes followed, the great painter of the sacrifice of Iphigenia in Aulis. No picture had more reputation for touching art and delicacy than this. After exhausting expression in all the principal agents, the artist covered the face of the father, not daring to trust his hand to attempt imitation, and leaving every spectator to imagine an agony of his own. As Euripides has the same incident, Fuzeli thinks the honour of being the first inventor is due to Timanthes. In the death of Germanicus, Poussin hid the face of his wife. Timanthes seems to have been ingenious in his inventions; to give the idea of great size to a sleeping Cyclops, he introduced two satyrs trying to span his thumb. Pliny adds, that there was a head painted by him in the Temple of Peace at Rome, and which was a perfect specimen of art.

Euxenides taught Aristides, the great master of expression, and Eupompus taught Pamphilus, who was the master of Apelles, a name synonymous with perfection in finish, but not for invention like Zeuxis, monumental commemorations like Polygnotus, composition like Amphion, or expression like

Aristides. No ; Apelles was the deity of tabular pictures, the greatest glory of the art in Pliny's mind, but not in the minds of those who see beyond the range of a dining-parlour. Eupompus painted a victor with a palm branch in his hand ; and such was his influence in Greece, that he was allowed to divide painting into three schools, viz. the Ionian, Sicyonian, and Athenian. Pamphilus was a Macedonian, who combined literature with painting and made it a principle of tuition, that no man could be great in either who was not a mathematician ; for he denied that without geometry art could be perfected. He taught nobody under a talent, which both Apelles and Melanthus paid. So great was the influence of this distinguished man, that first at Sicyon, and afterwards in all Græce, he got it established as a principle of education, that all clever boys should be taught on tablets the art of delineating, which is the foundation of painting. He considered this art as the first that should be taught in a liberal education. Slaves were prohibited the exercise of design ; which was an absurd law, because in literature it would have prevented Æsop or Terence from developing their genius. What right have any creatures, who are obliged to eat and sleep like the meanest slave, to pass a law to prohibit the exercise of any natural talent, if the Almighty has not disdained to think one worthy of being so gifted ? The consequence of this was, that no slave ever distinguished himself in the arts.

About the 107th Olympiad, after Echion and Theramichus, came the god of high finish and grace, Apelles. His style is always the precursor of decay. First came a race in art, amongst whom invention, expression, form, colour, and execution, in a series of pictures intended to illustrate a principle were enough, provided the principle was expressed. These

were the *monumental geniuses*. But when the art becomes national and glorious, the noble and the opulent become ambitious to share the glory with their country; and the art sinks to the humble office of adorning apartments. As is the demand, such will be the supply; and the genius of a country is thus turned from national objects and public commemorations to private sympathies and domestic pleasures. At this period of Greek taste appeared Apelles; refined, accomplished, delicate, devoting his whole soul to single perfections equally adapted for a temple or a palace, and patronised equally by his sovereign and the people. Educated by Pamphilus, he was grounded to the very foundation, and consequently drew, as Burke says to Barry, with "the last degree of perfection." Apelles, Aristides, Nichomachus, and Protogenes, were the most distinguished artists of Alexander's time.

Apelles wrote copiously on his art, and explained its principles. His treatises were extant in Pliny's time, and even in that of Suidas,<sup>1</sup> who speaks of them; and as they were probably illustrated with designs, the loss is much to be deplored. Beauty was the leading feature of his style, as well as of that of the greatest painters of the same period. In grace he defied competition; and this explains the secret of his triumph. "I know when to leave off," said he, "which is a great art; Protogenes does not. Over-working is injurious." He was a very generous man, and acknowledged when others were superior to him; observing that Amphion<sup>2</sup> was a better composer, and Asclepiadorus more correct in proportion. Amongst all the stories of Pliny, the most delightful is

<sup>1</sup> About the year 1100 of our era.

<sup>2</sup> Junius (*de Pictura Veterum*) only finds Amphion mentioned twice in ancient authors, and it is hence supposed that Echion would be a better reading.

that of Apelles and Protogenes, which seems to be an authentic fact ; and even if it were not, it would illustrate the principles of Grecian art. Protogenes lived at Rhodes and Apelles sailed to see him. Having landed, he called, and found the artist "not at home." Being shewn by an old woman into his painting-room, he found a tablet with its wax ground ready for a picture, and taking up a brush, drew an exquisite line in colour down the tablet. Protogenes having returned, was shewn what had happened ; and, contemplating the beauty of the form, he said it must be Apelles, as nobody else could draw so perfect a work. He then took the brush and drew another still more refined, saying, if the stranger call again, shew him this, and say that that is what he is seeking. Apelles returned, and blushing to see himself outdone, again took a brush and drew a third, leaving nothing to be exceeded in refinement, (*nullum relinquens amplius subtilitati locum.*) Protogenes when he saw this immediately sought his visitor, saying that he could carry the line no further. The tablet with these lines upon it, was considered by all the Greek artists as a miracle of drawing. After the death of Apelles and Protogenes, and the conquest of the Romans, it was preserved in the palace of the Cæsars on the Palatine hill, where it was seen by Pliny containing nothing but three fleeting lines, (*tres lineas effugientes*) and yet superior to all that was to be found in the finest works. Unfortunately it was burned at the destruction of the palace.

Now comes the question, what were these lines which could thus speak to artists who had never seen each other, the common language of a common code of law for design. "*Secuit lineas*" does not mean actually to cut the lines in two, but in the technical idiom of English artists, to strike a line. It was not the metal cestrum, but the hair brush,

and therefore *cut* in this sense could not have been meant. To *cut* with a brush means to design with an air of power. Three lines varied in shape would mean nothing, if nothing was expressed; but if some known contour of the body was taken in repose, three variations of its position without alteration would be as much as could be expected in the contour. Suppose that Apelles drew a line from the clavicle A to the pubis B of a body in profile, shaping all the parts as he went correctly like fig. 1. Next, suppose that Protogenes having come in saw the line, and knew that in finely-formed men, the stomach, from great exercise and temperate living, becomes small; the contour would curve in at C, so that that portion of the *rectus* muscle would retire, as in many of the Greek statues. He would then take the same

Fig. 1.

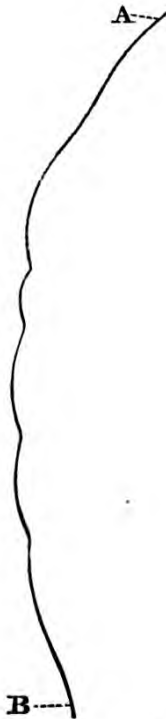


Fig. 2.

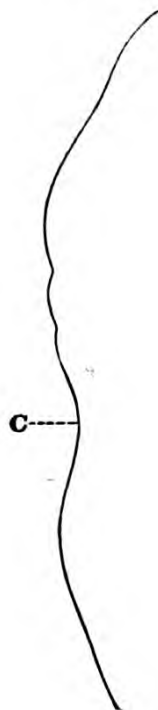
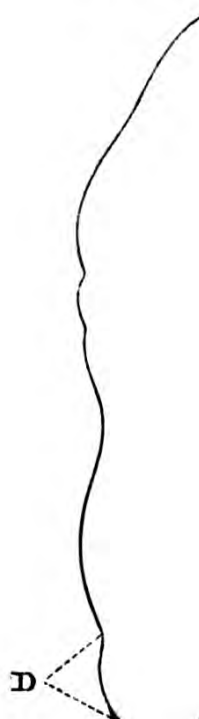


Fig. 3.





contour, draw it again on the wax tablet, and make this variation. Again, suppose that Apelles returned and on seeing himself vanquished, took the brush and drew the same contour, allowing the variation of Protogenes, but remembering that in powerful men, the *pyramidalis* D, fig. 3, arising from the *pubis* and going into the *rectus*, makes another and the last variation. Then Protogenes returning, and seeing that nothing more could be done unless the body was altered in position, he would acknowledge the line to be completed.

In Conduci's Five Dialogues, it is stated that Michel Angelo thought it must have been a contour of some part of the body. Now, this singular contest would be felt by all artists as one of the greatest utility. It would be wondered at by connoisseurs, and would illustrate a great principle; namely, that a knowledge of construction was the basis of correct design and the foundation of all beauty.

It was the continual practice of this eminent man to do something every day, whatever happened; and hence the proverb, "No day without a line." If artists were to write this over their painting-room doors, it would not be without advantage. Rubens rose at four, and was in his painting till five in the afternoon, with occasional variations. All the greatest men of antiquity and of modern art, have been the most diligent and the most industrious. And here is the most celebrated of the tabular painters of antiquity afraid to let a day pass without the use of the pencil. Apelles used also to hide himself behind his works to hear the remarks of the public. This deference to the public voice evinced by sculptors, painters, and statesmen, is a beautiful proof of the sense and understanding of the time. Nothing was done in defiance of public taste, but every thing in conformity to its dictates;

and though this does and often did lead to great injustice in political matters, in art the maxim is infallible.

Apelles of Cous excited envy enough, and notwithstanding his graceful manners, his tender heart, and his accomplished mind, when driven by stress of weather into Alexandria, the courtiers of Ptolemý, hating his superiority, and fearing his probable fortune, sent him a pretended invitation to sup with the king. Apelles went; the king felt astonished at the liberty, and sending to demand explanation, discovered the imposition. On inquiring if Apelles knew the person who had given him the invitation, he immediately sketched his face on the wall, and the king recognised the culprit. Courts, kings, and people can only judge of results. The infinite number of repeated acts, the *nulla diessine linea*, the failures, the recoveries, the musings, the thinkings, that had taken place with the "cestrum cum lumine," they had not witnessed; therefore, knowing their utter incapacity to do as Apelles did, they concluded that he was a wonder, and he of course became a favourite. As an evidence of that peculiar tact by which such men are sure to please kings and nobility, namely, by the power of seizing the most agreeable expression of any sitter's face, however ugly, and rendering his very defects a cause of elegant concealment; he painted Antigonus, who had lost one eye, in profile, concealed his defective eye, and made him as graceful as if he were Alexander. This was the great secret of his fortunes, as it was that of Titian's, Vandyke's and Reynold's; and though not to be compared in point of taste or knowledge of the art, this was also the secret of the popularity of Lawrence, mere portrait painter as he was, and nothing more.

Polygnotus, Pausias, Aristides, Timanthes, Zeuxis, Parrhasius, Pamphilus, Euphranor, and Timomachus did not so

completely gratify the vanity of their contemporaries, and were not such personal favourites as Apelles; for there is no gratitude equal to the gratitude of being successfully painted. Kings bow to the unknown power of having their momentary expressions observed, seized, transferred, and fixed for ages, and whilst colours and canvass last, carried on, for the admiration of a distant age, when the existing one is past and forgotten. What can equal the gratitude of a woman to have her beauty preserved, whilst she is in her bloom, for the admiration of her children when age has shrivelled her form, or misfortune destroyed her happiness? The world may be elevated, excited, roused, by the commemoration of the great deeds of ancestors or heroes; but no sympathy is ever excited, and no personal vanities are ever so happily gratified by any class of painters, as by the great portrait-painter. The degree of imagination required is not of that irresistible kind which forces him to leave the model before him, using it only to realise his own burning conceptions, so that all likeness of the *individual* is lost; he requires no more than to retain in his mind the best expression of the individual before him to identify it upon canvass. But it must be exactly like, or it is nothing. After the likeness is completed, the sitter will have no objection to the highest degree of embellishment. There the great portrait-painter shews the degree of *fancy* wanted, and he that embellishes most, without losing resemblance, will be the most welcomed, as Apelles was, by the world.

To put Apelles in comparison with Polygnotus is out of the question. Highly-wrought individual figures, little more than portraits of beautiful nature, cannot rank so high in the judgment, though they may in the delicate sympathies of the world. But that single terrific conception of the demon Eurynome, for which no prototype in nature could be found,

that momentary blush which crimsoned his Cassandra,<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's praise that he made men better than they were, and Plato's ranking him with Phidias, settles the question of his greatness ; and as a portrait expression must be seen before it can be done, and must be like or it is nothing, there is an end of the highest quality of human genius, invention. Indeed, whatever the vanity of the world may be inclined to feel, the greatest portrait painter is but an inferior artist.

The age of Polygnotus and Phidias was the meridian age of Greek art ; and that of Apelles was the setting glory. From the latter period it sunk gradually as if nature had been exhausted by the previous effort. Such ages have never since been seen ; such perfection had never been realized before, and never will be again ; for in order to become such sculptors and painters, men must also become idolaters. But to return and conclude the notice of Apelles, this court-favourite of antiquity. Notwithstanding the education of Alexander by Aristotle, notwithstanding that *ἡ γραφικη* was a portion of his education, Alexander was little more than a glorious barbarian in art. He talked so absurdly in the painting-room of Apelles, that the artist was obliged to request that his majesty would be cautious, lest the boys should laugh as they ground their colours. Apelles may be considered as the Titian of Greek art, with the addition of all that vast knowledge of form, which every painter and every school was obliged to master. But the disposition to perfect single figures, and the acknowledgment that others exceeded him in composition, clearly point out the extent of his fertility. Though Pliny describes many beautiful pictures, his greatest are single figures. His Venus Anadyomene was the most celebrat-

<sup>1</sup> Lucian.

ed of all his works; but being painted upon wood, it was destroyed by insects in the time of Augustus. He began another, and having completed it as far as the bosom, died; but although the contours were completed for finishing, nobody would venture to touch it, such was the extreme veneration entertained for him. By this description we see the nature of the Greek process; first, the ground, then the drawing in, next the impasto preparation, and then the completion part by part. He had got the picture finished as far as the bosom; and therefore to finish highly by degrees was his system. He was not deficient in expression, for he painted persons dying with great power. His imitation must have been perfect, for his painted horses are said to have made real horses neigh; and his colour must have been exquisite, for he glazed like the Venetian school. Pliny mentions him as one of those who painted with four colours; but this is a mistake; for it was in the age of Polygnotus that *blue* was not used. From a passage in Cicero,<sup>1</sup> it appears that that age was famous for “form and contour;” whereas, according to the same writer, *all* things were perfect in the works of Protogenes, Nichomachus, Echion, and Apelles.

Pliny is therefore right in saying that pictures which constituted the opulence of towns, were painted with four colours only; but he is not as clear as usual in regard to the period to which this observation applies. Quintilian, calling the colour of Polygnotus “simplex color,” seems to indicate the absence of *blue*; whilst *red*, *yellow*, *black*, and *white* did not produce such gorgeous splendour as in the age of Apelles. Thus Quintilian, as well as Cicero, collaterally proves Pliny to be in part right. It is extraordinary that Reynolds did not

<sup>1</sup> *Brutus*, c. 18.



allude to the absence of blue in the enumeration of Pliny. Great depth, fine tone, simplicity, and modesty, can be obtained without blue, but never that tremendous magnificence produced by the contrast of the deep and awful azures of Titian. Though Polygnotus did not use blue, his black was made from vine-stalks and wine-lees,<sup>1</sup> which render black more blue than the ivory black of Apelles, which was discovered by him, and is used to this hour in Europe. There were several of the same name, but *Apelles Cous* distinguishes the great Apelles, as *Aristides Thebanus* does the great Aristides.

After this long account of the courtly, accomplished, and highly-wrought Apelles, there may be something interesting to allude to Aristides the "great master of expression," as Fuzeli calls him. He was the first who painted deep human emotions, fierce passions, and distressing perturbations; but he was hard in colour, says Pliny, and not so harmonious as Apelles, probably like Raffaele, the great Italian master of expression, in comparison with Titian. His finest picture was that of a mother dying from a wound which she had received in the sacking of her native city. Her infant was trying to reach the nipple with its boneless gums, whilst the mother, faint and exhausted, appeared struggling to save it from sucking, lest blood might mingle with its nourishment; a tender and affecting thought. Alexander was so touched by this picture at Thebes, when the city was taken, that he sent it to Pella.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Pliny, lib. xxxv. The sea in the Venus Anadyomene is quoted as a proof that *blue* must have been used. But where is there any *blue* in Vandervelde? We do not think that a picture exists with *blue* in his sea.

<sup>2</sup> Raffaele imitated this in his plague, where a fine youth is putting away an infant from a dying mother's bosom; but the utter want



Protogenes was another of the great men of this time. It is indeed extraordinary to reflect how genius in art and literature seems always to come in clusters in every country. He was born at a small town on the coast of Asia Minor, subject to the Rhodians ; and he got his living till he was fifty years old, in great poverty, painting beautiful ornaments for the prows of ships. He was not a man of fertile invention, and spent years over single works, which induced Apelles to say that he never knew when he had finished. His celebrated work was Talissus, which occupied him seven years. Titian took eight to paint the Pietro Martyre, and seven to finish the Last Supper for Charles V. ;<sup>1</sup> and yet in Titian's works there is no appearance of over diligence. Pliny says he painted his pictures four times over, so that if one picture was destroyed another might be ready. Nothing shews so completely the exact degree of knowledge which Pliny had of art as this absurd conclusion from an admirable practice. Protogenes proceeded with his works as Titian did, by *stages* ; and each stage was a separate impasto of colour, which helped the next till completed. Of this artist the story is told of his flinging his sponge at a dog's mouth in a rage, because he had vainly tried to hit breath coming out of it, and by that accident succeeding ; a circumstance which shews that it was tempera painting, for a sponge would not have done for wax. Such a habit of daily application had Protogenes, that when Demetrius besieged Rhodes, he would not leave his painting-room, but proceeded daily in his studies amidst the noise of battering rams and catapultae. The king came often to visit him ; of taste in making the boy hold his nose for fear of infection, renders the sentiment not pathetic but at once disgusting and ridiculous.

<sup>1</sup> See, in Ridolphi, Titian's letter to the emperor.

and that part of the town where he worked was spared, and the picture thus finished was said to have *been done at the point of the sword*. Protogenes painted the mother of Aristotle ; and the philosopher urged him to execute the battles of Alexander ; but he was not a man of rapid conception or fertile invention for a series, and could not be moved.

It is curious to reflect, that all the great painters painted portraits ; which proves that they thought it essential to that truth which was the foundation of their ideal beauty. Indeed, every great painter *should paint a portrait a month* ; and if, like the Greeks, he has always nature for his works, he never can degenerate into manner.

Of the other painters, Asclepiodorus was celebrated for proportion ; Nicomachus for rapidity of hand, and Theon for wild conceptions, “*quas Græci vocant φαντασιαις.*” Pliny places Theon amongst the herd, whilst Quintilian and Ælian place him amongst the illustrious, where he ought to be. He painted a single warrior dashing forward on the spectators ; and collecting the public, he kept the picture behind a curtain, when in the midst of a blast of trumpets, the curtain was dropped, and the wonderful figure terrified the people. He also painted Orestes, distracted and insane, and proved himself a great and wild inventor. The three remaining great men of the fine period, were Pausias, Euphranor, and Timomachus. No passage has excited so much discussion as the well known one in Pliny, where he says, “*nulla gloria artificum est, nisi qui tabulas pinxêre,*” as if he meant that the only glory in art consisted in tabular pictures, “*πινακες,*” on wood, and that there was but little in monumental and mural efforts. Pliny, however, does not here contrast the tabular pictures of Apelles with the mural paintings of Polygnotus, but with the works of one Ludius, a Roman, a mere ornamental

landscape-painter upon walls, like our Bond Street paper painters. This was much the fashion in Pliny's time, which he laments; and many examples of the same species may now be seen in Pompeii.

Having thus described the fancies and caprices by which the art had been degraded, Pliny turns to the highly beautiful tabular works of Apelles, and observes naturally enough; "This is not the thing; the glory of art and of artists consists in the Venus of Apelles, the mother of Aristides, the Ialysus of Protogenes, and not in this mechanical whim, which is not the glory and the end of painting." This, perhaps, is the explanation which he would give if he were alive and able to answer us. Is it not unjust then to take up such ground as M. Raoul-Rochette has done in France, and Payne Knight in England, and infer that there was no real glory in any other mode of painting? The ancients estimated mural painting at Delphi, as the Italians do in the Vatican. But they did not undervalue tabular painting, small pictures, encaustic, landscapes, or humour; they painted in every style and they excelled in all.

Pliny now proceeds to the encaustic painters, of whom Pausias and Euphranor appear to have been the greatest. Pausias was a master of foreshortening, as we learn from Pliny's description of a bull which he painted in front and projecting beyond the tablet. After Pausias came the Isthmian Euphranor, who wrote on symmetry and colour, painted great and small works, and delineated statues and animals. He said of his Theseus, that "it was real flesh, whilst that of Parrhasius had fed on roses." Then came Nicias who painted women beautifully, understood light and shadow, and was another pillar of art. Metrodorus was both a philosopher and a painter; and when the victorious Paulus

desired Perseus to send him a philosopher to educate his children, and a painter to arrange his triumph, Metrodorus was despatched as a person capable of executing both tasks. Timomachus is the last of this splendid list whom it is necessary to mention. He died, like Apelles, leaving an important work unfinished.

Such were the most illustrious men of the three finest periods of Greek painting. The first period of Greek art was that before Pericles; the second, or that of Pericles himself, was the finest, the highest, and the purest in painting, sculpture, and architecture; the third was the epoch of Alexander, the most refined, but prophetic of the corruption followed; then came the subjugation of the Romans, when the noblest works of the Greeks were seized as tribute, or matters of right, and Italy was inundated by the productions of Greek talent.

This influx of foreign productions entirely suffocated native Italian genius. Greek productions became matters of property; and dealers sprung up who manufactured originals to supply the market of the rich collector. Galleries were formed to produce genius, which had sprung up from national demand without a single gallery or a single collection of any works, except the productions of their native soil. The most celebrated works were copied and re-copied by the Greeks in all parts of the Mediterranean. Horace alludes to this; and there can be no doubt whatever that the effect was to render all native attempts of the Romans and Etruscans no longer available. For not one great artist is named during the whole period of progressive decay from the Cæsars to Constantine; and the Romans or Latins never produced any talent worth consideration till the revival of art in Italy, after so many ages, in the fifteenth century. Then, the

same principle operating, and the church and state demanding art as an assistant, outpoured an abundance of native talent, because there was a vent, as there had been before, in Greece, Egypt, and Chaldæa; and the genius of Rome, Florence, Pisa, and Venice, vindicated their long suppressed claims to originality. Amongst the illustrious Romans, Julius Cæsar seems to have been a magnificent collector; but whether, like Napoleon, he was also a magnificent patron of the talent of his time is not known. He bought Greek pictures, and presented them to Roman temples; but one work of native art, produced by native patronage, is more honour both to patron and to artist than a gallery of foreign pictures be they ever so divine.

Upon the whole, before tracing art from its decay to its revival, we cannot but acknowledge as evident, that a period of dearth in genius has generally succeeded in the world to one of prolific production. In painting and sculpture, secondary causes, such as the nature of the government, or the circumstances of the two arts being required for political purposes, may considerably facilitate the development of genius. But it is not so with the poet. He can give vent to his immortal thoughts in poverty or wretchedness, independently of the taste of the times, or the patronage of the state. Milton, in obscurity and blindness, wrote *Paradise Lost*; and Savage, in poverty and wretchedness, composed his *Bastard* in the streets, begging bits of paper as he walked, when he had more thoughts than his mind could contain, and thus, as effectually preserved them as if he had been bred in a palace, or had sheets of the finest *hot-pressed* to receive his lucubrations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, art. Savage.



After the conquest of Greece, and the removal of art and artists to Rome, the genius of painting seems to have left the world. The Roman school of painting and sculpture is scarcely worth a single thought. In the last years of the republic the art sunk rapidly. Augustus tried to revive it; but though the pupils and descendants of the illustrious dead attempted to second his views, and though the writings of Apelles, Euphranor, and Pamphilus, were all in existence, and their principles known and acted upon, genius was nowhere to be found. That divine spark with its attendant whisper, unseen but not unheard, which ever attends the gifted who are born for great objects, whether it supported Columbus amidst the storms of the Atlantic, Alexander as he plunged into Asia, Napoleon as he rushed into Italy, Wellington at Waterloo, Michel Angelo when he painted the Sistine Chapel, Raffaele when he entered the Vatican, or Phidias when he adorned the Parthenon; that supernatural, incomprehensible something, which inspires hope, "when the whole world seems adverse to desert," was gone from the earth like the glory which had blazed in the temple. All that the savage, splendid, imperial Romans could do, all the honours and riches they had to confer, were bestowed in vain. Architecture suited their savage vastness of mind better than painting; therefore architecture flourished, and Augustus was said "to have found Rome thatched, and left it marbled."

Not Babylon

Nor great Alcairo, such magnificence  
 Equalled in all their glories, to enshrine  
 Belus or Serapis<sup>1</sup> their gods, or seat  
 Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove  
 In wealth and luxury.

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<sup>1</sup> In this beautiful passage, the immortal author has made the



Claudius built a superb aqueduct, and Nero burned<sup>1</sup> and rebuilt a golden palace ; but he could not replace the lines of Apelles and Protogenes, or the miracles of Timanthes and Aristides, which perished in the conflagration. Galba, Otho, and Vetellius were hurried through life and empire too rapidly for art ; whilst Vespasian and Titus bewildered the Romans with their Cyclopean masses. Hadrian, himself an artist, endeavoured to recover art by indiscriminately encouraging Etruscans, Greeks, and Romans ; “ but such a medley of principle as their works displayed,” says Agincourt,<sup>2</sup> “ hastened the decay of art, and rendered the emperor hopeless of reviving it.” The art thus went floundering on until Dioclesian, with all the gorgeous splendour of an eastern monarch, mingled together Roman, Greek, and oriental art, and corrupting all taste led to its extinction. It was between the reign of Commodus and that of Constantine, that those causes were generated which undermined the empire, and brought art, science, and literature into the chasm. Of forty emperors who, from the second to the fourth century had struggled for the diadem and obtained it, twenty had been murdered by the army and the people. “ Ainsi” says Montesquieu “ comme la grandeur de la république, fut fatale au gouvernement républicain, la grandeur de l’empire le fut à la vie des empéreur.”<sup>3</sup> Constantine’s removal of the seat of empire did not so much begin the destruction of art as complete it ; for previous causes, domestic and political, had been preparing the ruin for centuries before.

penult syllable of *Serapis* short, whereas it is in reality long, *Serāpis* ; an error which could scarcely have been expected in one who was a great scholar as well as a great poet.

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus does not seem altogether to believe it.

Agincourt, *Histoire de l’Art*, tom. i. <sup>3</sup> *Décadence des Romains*.

Agincourt thinks that as far as art is concerned, too much has been attributed to this removal of the empire. But yet the first epoch of what may be called *modern art* in opposition to *ancient*, must date from the introduction of Christianity as a state religion, when the whole moral feelings of Greeks and Romans took another turn in painting and sculpture. Although Constantine only grafted Christianity on Paganism, and founded more catholicism than Christianity, by meeting and uniting the prejudices of both Pagans and Christians ; yet surely if genius could ever be created by patronage, the age of Constantine, and those of Charlemagne, and Louis XIV. ought to have rivalled those of Pericles and Julius. Such was the rage for splendour in this reign, that the quarries of Phrygian marble and of the isle of Proconnesus, were almost destroyed to furnish palaces for the emperor, his sons, and his ministers. Temples, palaces, forums, triumphal arches, colossal statues, an hippodrome, and eight public baths were built and adorned at once ; and in addition, splendid commissions were given to the painters for pictures of Christ, the Virgin, the prophets, and the apostles. Rome, Naples, Capua, Antioch, Tyre, Jerusalem, and even Bethlehem, felt the effects of this magnificent employment ; but what were the results to painting ? Nothing, absolutely nothing, to guide anybody except the antiquary ; and if any evidence were wanting to show that the genius and the patron must exist together, or the result will be nothing, the end of Constantine's splendour would abundantly supply it.

The moral character of ancient Greece was gone ; the instinct of public glory was passed ; their olive crowns, the adequate reward of talent on a great principle, were sneered at ; and " Lucian," (as the author of the *Discours Histor-*

*ique* observes) “had already ridiculed this tribunal,” which had listened with rapture to Herodotus, and crowned Aëtion for a fine picture, and which in its days of Marathonian glory, had done more than ever was done before or since in rousing human effort, mental and bodily, to its highest pitch of excellence. Luxury, indolence, vice, fanaticism, cant, sophistry, intrigue, and imposture, had supplanted the pure aspirations of patriotism and glory. “The great and the opulent,” says Pliny and Vitruvius, “were fonder of gold and glitter than purity of design or pathos of expression, or perfection of form; overwhelmed with colours from all the countries of the earth, with double the advantages of Polygnotus, and Zeuxis, and Aristides,” who painted with four only, “*nulla nobilis pictura est.*” Of course, this is always the end, when the moral and national importance of painting is undervalued. When native art is despised, and spurious foreign productions are preferred; when connoisseurs of what *is past* abound, and connoisseurs of what *is passing* exist not; when painting is considered as a bauble or a bit of furniture, and painters share dignity with upholsterers and gilders, what wonder if “*nulla pictura*” is the cry?

Gold and vermillion being thus introduced upon the walls of palaces and preferred to beautiful art, in came arabesques. Claudius had before introduced Indian patterns and mosaic pictures, which had hitherto been kept for pavements, till Commodus, for the sake of a new sensation, had a portrait in his palace of Piscennius Niger,<sup>1</sup> painted in mosaic, which may be considered as the first picture of this description. When painting was in this staggering condition, Justinian gave it a final blow by ordering encaustic

Spartian, *In Vita Pisc. Nig.* cap. 6.

and distemper designs, as vulgar, to be banished from ceilings and walls, and mosaic, marble, and gold, to be preferred. Though mosaic was perhaps one of the means of preserving art and of introducing it into Italy, yet it should only be used in pavements, or to preserve the works of great masters. The anti-pagan zeal of the early Christians is well known. They used to put ropes round the necks of Apollos and Venuses to try them publicly, like criminals, find them guilty, and pound them to dust. But human nature is always the same. A thousand years afterwards a similar scene was acted in Scotland by John Knox and the reformers, nor had England escaped the fury of iconoclasm. Eusebius<sup>1</sup> informs us that in the empire whole towns rose and destroyed the temples in which they had just worshipped. The air echoed with the noise of hammers, the crashing of pediments, the breaking of pillars, and the shouts of a maddened and frenzied populace. The finest works of Phidias, Scopas, Polycletus, and Praxiteles, and all that was left of Polygnotus, Apelles, Zeuxis, or Euphranor, were demolished or burned, like wretches who had infected religion, and their ashes were danced on with fanatical exultation. So great indeed had been the destruction, that when Arcadius and Honorius issued a fresh edict to go on destroying, they added, as well they might, "Si qua etiam nunc in templis fanisque consistent, "If any pictures or statues are still left." During this frenzy was introduced into art, *painting without nature*, and after producing a race of monsters down to Golzius and Spranger, there began the cant of "nature putting an artist out." What Zeuxis did not dare to do, what Apelles never thought of, what Phidias never permitted to

<sup>1</sup> Montesq. *Décadence des Romains*, 133.

be mentioned in his school, a parcel of painters brought into practice by the very mysticism of their impossible theories. Man was corrupt, being born in sin and vicious in practice ; to take him as a model therefore when painting holy subjects, was to act under the influence of Satan. Man was banished, and so was woman, and nature in every thing ; till at last all painters painted in one way, and in came *manner* into the great art of nature, and like a "leperous distillment" stained her garment and poisoned her beauty. Yet the traditional maxims of the ancient fathers, on beauty and art, give one a very good idea of what were the maxims of the finer Pagan periods. "Art is nothing but an imitation of nature," says St. Athanasius, (*Orat. contr. Gent. c. xviii. p. 18.*) "Ancient artists sought to surpass each other by faithful imitation," (*Arnob. Advers. Gent. lib. vi. fol. 68*) "Nature is the archetype, art the image ; every image has a model, and painters imitate what they see," (Theodoret.) "Imitation is the merit of painting ; be not seduced by an illusion," (St. Clement.) "When begging the people not to be seduced by pictures and statues as if they were gods, tell them that pictures and statues are imitations of nature, and therefore cannot be gods." These maxims of the fourth century had clearly descended from a nobler era. Besides the treatises of Apelles, Euphranor, and Pamphilus, were all in existence, and were read by the educated and accomplished ; and we see how skilfully the fathers of the church tried to save fine works from destruction, by assuring the people that they were *mere imitations of life*, for such was the principle of artists. Are not these quotations then collateral evidences of the practice of the Greeks, if we had known nothing of the girls of Crotona sitting to Zeuxis ?

But Christianity was at first the ruin of art, by making



purity of heart every thing, and physical ugliness, or deformity, nothing ; by teaching that as all beautiful works of art were remnants of idolatry, they ought to be destroyed ; and by inculcating that mankind being corrupt and born in sin, no Christian painter ought to look at the naked figure whilst he was painting it. Add to these prejudices, the predilection of eastern notions for gold and silver, the preference of eastern dresses to the simplicity of Greek clothing, the controversies which took place as to whether our Saviour was ugly or handsome, and the vehemence with which Pagans and Christians both entered into them ; and no one can wonder at the state into which painting declined.

The division of opinion about the person of Christ, and the dread of the early Fathers to expose the cross to Pagans, who, familiar with golden-locked Apollos and perfumed Venuses, could not comprehend that suffering and majestic pains were founded upon a higher philosophy, so embarrassed the painters, that to avoid collision they painted Christ *as an allegory* thus lingering with their Greek feelings about the form of beauty and of grace. It must be interesting to all readers thus to trace the progress of feeling relating to the head of Christ.<sup>1</sup> In the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, beauty and youth still predominated ; and he is painted youthful and handsome, crushing the lion under his feet, or as a young shepherd with his flock. With allegory the beauty of our Saviour ended, whilst the Fathers of the church, like the priests of Egypt, interfered, and issued an edict ordering him to be represented in agony on the

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustin declares that in his time no faces of Christ or the Virgin were known, and that no pictures were painted of them before the council of Ephesus ; yet there are seven reported originals, four of which are by St. Luke's own hand, now in Rome.



cross. But here the order was evaded. The Greeks still struggled for the beautiful, and as if it were the never-dying principle of their souls, painted our blessed Saviour dying upon the cross, but smiling with triumphant glory as if rejoicing in his sacrifice. In whatever the Greeks were compelled to do, beauty seemed still to be the basis of their art. By degrees, however, the poor descendants of Apelles and Polygnotus finding no employment except on the conditions prescribed, the person of Christ became gradually degraded in art ; and at the separation of the Latin church, to paint him ugly, bloody and agonized, was the settled principle of representation, and has more or less influenced his representation ever since. There seems to be some doubt as to the extent of the devastation committed by the Goths. Alaric staid but three days in Rome, and Attila had himself painted in one of his Milan palaces seated on a throne, and receiving the homage of a Roman emperor.<sup>1</sup> Theodoric seems to have had a very good feeling for art. He laments, in a letter to Symmachus, the ruins of works of genius, begs their preservation, and concludes with observing that Rome has still a *population* of statues with herds of bronze horses. The expulsion of the Goths and the invasion of the Lombards, again afflicted the art ; but it had found its way into France, and the churches of Paris, Tours, Bordeaux and Clermont, were ornamented by native painters.

Though the popes had begun to adorn the churches, and art in the earliest times had been kept alive with considerable talent in the catacombs in Rome ; though Europe had been astonished by the splendour of the ecclesiastical patronage of painters ; yet the next great epoch after Constantine

<sup>1</sup> Suidas.

originates in the efforts of the illustrious Charlemagne. He formed the plan of renovating art, science and literature; and he would have accomplished his object, if the genius of the age had been worthy of the emperor. The ancient practice of painting churches, kept alive by previous popes, he confirmed by a law; and agents every year visited the provinces to see that the law was observed. If a royal church was to be painted, the bishops and abbots were responsible. If, in the midst of a campaign, an order was issued for a church, one to paint the walls was included; and no church was considered as finished till that was done, the object of the emperor being to obliterate the remembrance of the splendid altars of the Pagans, by still more magnificent Christian ornaments. "Repair your church," says the archbishop of Treves; "you know the decision of the emperor."

Two monkish painters of the time are celebrated; and France and Britain began even at this early period, to take an interest in the arts. Biscop, abbot of Weremouth, had brought pictures from Italy. Charlemagne had invited king Offra to protect painting, with but little effect; yet though the walls of English churches were whitewashed, the English began to adorn the ceilings and the windows, and hung tapestry upon the walls.<sup>1</sup>

In Spain, the Arabians had introduced their art, such as it could be, under the prohibition of Mahommed; and miniatures or manuscripts were so eagerly bought all over Europe, that the artists in France, Germany and Italy, devoted themselves to this production; though here again it was acknowledged by all, that they were beaten by the Greeks. In spite of all this, the art continued to decay; and at the se-

<sup>1</sup> William of Malmsbury.

cond Council of Nice the members gave evidence of the state to which monks and bishops had reduced it. "How can painters be blamed?" say they; "the painter *invents nothing*. Invention and composition belong to the Fathers;<sup>1</sup> the art alone is the painters'." Inadvertently, too, the emperor injured the art by altering the dress of his cavalry and foot. The women as usual followed the example, and having relinquished the pure taste of the Greeks, dress has in consequence become an annual novelty and change. The Paladin and his horse were covered with iron and mail; angles and straight lines predominated; the naked form was more than ever concealed, and the artist deprived of his materials.

Though the art suffered at the death of Charlemagne, yet it was kept alive by monks and by bishops. At Rome, at Palermo, and at Milan, religious painters preserved it from decay; they sprung up all over Europe, and even St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, is spoken of as a skilful painter and maker of instruments.

It is curious, after all that has been written about oil painting, and the discovery made by John Van Eyk, to find a writer of this period called Eraclius, in a treatise on painting, speaking of oil painting: "De omnibus coloribus cum oleo distemperatis." Another monk wrote a treatise, in which he says, "he will tell the world how the Greeks mixed their colours." Now, as according to Suidas, the writings of Apelles and Euphranor were in existence in the tenth century, and these people lived before that time, there is reason to believe that they were aware of oil painting having been practised in ancient Greece, and that subsequent discoveries were but different revivals.

<sup>1</sup> Concil. Nic. ii. act. vi. tom. iv. ed. 1714.

Whilst the art feebly struggled on in the west, the court of Constantine Porphyrogenitus was the rendezvous of artists, and in 997 St. Mark was built at Venice by Greeks. In contrasting Greek with Roman art at this time, the Greek is still superior. The Greek composition did not want dignity, whilst in the Roman, all sound principle seemed dead. The most ignorant Greeks shewed taste in their draperies, and their heads have character, and in the arrangement of hair, they remind one of the Panathenaic procession ; whilst the Romans, with their large heads and long limbs, evince a gross ignorance of beauty.

In the tenth century, tapestry for a time superseded painting ; though in Germany, France, Italy and England, many painters flourished. In England, historical commemorations were in fashion, and the Duchess of Northumberland adorned Ely Cathedral with a series of pictures illustrating the deeds of her distinguished lord.<sup>1</sup> When William the Conqueror came, he introduced a new style of architecture ; but both at York and Canterbury, paintings then adorned the walls. In 1013, a head of Christ was executed in mosaic, and is still considered as the wonder of the middle ages.

After so many vicissitudes of fortune, painting now began to shew symptoms of revival. Frescos had been executed in Rome in 498, and in 795 ; and there was a head of Christ painted in St. John Lateran, and still to be there seen, which gave evidence of great feeling. But the grand impulse was given in the year 1066; when St. Didier sent for Greek artists to adorn Monte Casino at Subiaco. The example was followed. Pisa, Venice, Amalfi, Genoa, and Milan, all muni-

<sup>1</sup> Strutt.

principal corporations rivalled each other ; and when Pisa sent to Greece to collect as many splendid remains of art as could be obtained to adorn the dome of the city, Buschetto, a celebrated Greek architect, was engaged to superintend their embarkation, to accompany them during the voyage, and to land them safely for the purchasers. Buschetto was received with so much enthusiasm, that he founded a school of sculpture, which existed for two hundred years ; and ultimately out of this very Greek school, came the great artist Nicolo Pisano, the head of the Italico-Pisan school. From this moment art, after having sunk to the lowest barbarism, went on improving till the taking of Constantinople by Mahomed II., an event which scattered the Greeks collected at that court all over Europe. Hundreds went to Italy as painters, sculptors, chasers, and mosaic painters ; and by their struggles for existence, inoculated Italian artists with some remnant of their taste for beauty, decayed as it was. Cimabue was their pupil, and Giotto was his. The Catholic church wanted artists, and genius again began to shew itself. One man of genius appeared after another, till Michel Angelo, Leonardo, Raffaele, Titian, and Corregio, were the glorious results. And though it cannot be denied that the high aspirations of Christianity, by placing every thing human on its proper level on earth, in comparison with eternal happiness, had justly prostrated the splendid beauty of Pagan art, by exposing its idolatrous tendencies ; though the sufferings, and the agonies of its founder and its martyrs had revived its pathos with higher objects than mere beauty of form or face, and saved painting and sculpture from extinction ; yet it must be acknowledged, that the beauty of Christian art has never rivalled the indisputable perfection of the Pagans. To their enthusiastic overestimate of the



religious value of physical, as emblematic of moral beauty, is their perfection attributable ; but if it can only be revived by some similar delusion, the result will in our opinion more than atone for any thing that seems doubtful or questionable in the principle.

The most eminent pictures of the middle ages, setting aside the cemeteries or catacombs, which cannot legitimately be referred to the middle ages, but to the earliest ages of Christianity, are to be found in Rome. The greatest works of the middle ages are the series of Popes, begun in the fifth century, and continued down to the present time. The next, which was executed in the year 1011, is the painting of the church of St. Urbano, where some of the Acts of the Apostles are represented on the walls. Though the mosaics of St. Mark's, executed by Greeks, were earlier, and kept art alive, yet, according to Lanzi, nothing in reality appeared which gave symptoms of the approach of any thing extraordinary, till about the thirteenth century ; and this revolution of style was entirely owing to sculpture.

The glory of this art belongs partly to the Tuscans, the legitimate descendants of the ancient Etruscans, but most especially to the Pisans, who first had the courage to burst the yoke which Greek art in its fallen state had imposed upon them, and to go at once to the antique ; and this glory belongs to Nicolo Pisano, a pupil of the school originally founded by the Greek Buschetto. There were in Pisa several ancient sarcophagi, but especially one, containing the body of Beatrice, mother of the Countess Matilda, with a bas-relief in good style, which served as the model of Nicolo ; on this he formed his style, in which there is something of the antique, especially in his heads and draperies. Many artists who had not done so before, immediately devoted them-



selves to sculpture ; and Nicolo Pisano must be considered as the first Italian, who opened the eyes of his contemporaries to the true principle of using the antique, that is, keeping nature in view at the moment of practice. In 1231 he cut an urn in Bologna, whence he was called "Nicolo of the urn;" and he produced two stories of the last judgment at Orvieto, and another work at Pisa, which convinced the world that he was born to found an epoch. He executed other great works, and was really the head of the illustrious school which produced Orcagna, Donatelo, and the famous Lorenzo Ghiberti, who made the beautiful bronze doors of which Michel Angelo said, that they were worthy to be the gates of paradise.

Many other eminent men came from his school. All Italy was more or less affected by Pisano's genius ; and though a sculptor, his effect on design was so great, that he must be considered as having had a material influence on painting. Painting remained behind sculpture, and even mosaic ; and Vasari exaggerates the effect of Cimabue's appearance in the year 1240 ; for Lanzi proves that there were Pisan painters of talent before that period, and that the early art does not in the first instance owe so much to the Florentines as Vasari has asserted. At Assisi there is a crucifixion by Guinta Pisano, who, according to an inscription, learned his art from the Greeks in 1210. This was before Cimabue ; but Lanzi says that the work is not inferior to Cimabue, and in drapery, colour, light, and shadow, composition and expression, very like the contemporary Greeks. Guinta disappeared and died, nobody knows where or how. Guido di Sienna was another name of this early period. In the Louvre there were some exquisite heads of angels with gilt glories, full of beauty and expression, executed by this

artist. Then followed Margaritone, who painted on canvass covered with size and plaster for a ground ; which the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, had done long before his time.

During the time that the neighbouring cities had founded a new style, Florence had no painters ; but when the authorities called in some Greeks in 1250, it is asserted that there was a painter called Bartolomeo. Vasari wishes of course to infer that Cimabue was the first Italian painter who gave the impulse ; but Lanzi proves the contrary. Although there is no city we owe so much to as Florence, yet the Florentines ought not to be allowed to deprive their old enemies of the honour of having produced earlier painters, besides Pisano.

Cimabue, who was both architect and painter, was honourably descended. That he might have been the scholar of Guinta is probable, because the Italians knew more than the Greeks of that time ; but there is every reason to believe that he learnt of those Greeks who had been called to Florence, and whom, according to Vasari, he stood whole days, when a boy, watching as they painted in Santa Maria Novella. From this moment indeed may be dated the excitement which impelled him to become a painter. At Assisi his genius seems to have been put forth with most power. Lanzi concludes the notice of him by saying, that Cimabue was the Michel Angelo, and Giotto the Raffaele of his age. In the Louvre there were one or two large examples of Virgins, staring and Gothic, and which the French, still more Gothic, were absolutely repainting.<sup>1</sup> Vigorous in his colour,

<sup>1</sup> The writer of this article, who saw a Frenchman solidly repainting a large picture of Cimabue in the private rooms of the Louvre, where he was admitted by Denon, asked the Frenchman who it was by: "Monsieur," said he, "je ne suis pas peintre, je suis restaurateur."

and colossal but ill-proportioned in his figures, Cimabue first gave indications of attempting something new in painting ; indeed, his watching the Greeks all day is so like an infatuated youth, that it bears truth on the face of it. Florence was often in commotion when his works appeared ; and although he was not actually the oldest painter, he was the first of that series which ended in Raffaello. His style was meagre, his drapery sharp, and his colour a species of illumination ; but though he had no light and shadow or perspective, he was a great man for his time ; and in some of his heads there are both character and expression.

Men of genius assist to call forth men of genius. In the neighbourhood of Florence, Cimabue accidentally found a youth tending sheep, and trying to draw one upon a slate. After some conversation with the boy, finding the youth ambitious to become an artist, he consulted his father, took him immediately under his own tuition, and advanced him rapidly. Cimabue was amply repaid for his generous conduct, as the innocent youth was Giotto, afterwards one of the great men of the time. No man can judge of Giotto's genius in England, because fragments of single heads or bits of altar pieces, are no fair criteria of a genius like his. His series of pictures in the Campo Santo are admirable, if allowance be made for the taste and simplicity of the age ; but there are many actions and positions of Giotto, as fine as can be conceived, and which other artists by aggrandising in form, have rendered models of imitation. He was the friend of Dante, and painted the portrait of the great poet. He seems to have been a facetious and amiable man as well as a genius, and was indisputably the greatest painter till Massacio. He went about Italy scattering seeds every where, and when the Papal See was moved to Avignon, he went with the court.

Giotto was the greatest of the Florentine school. He was the father of painting, as Boccaccio was the father of literature. He was sought for at Ravenna, and at all the great towns of Italy, and was patronised by all the first families. He was an object of study and admiration, until the time of Raffaello, and that of the Caraccis, and is so even at the present time. There are in Giotto instances of pathos and expression, which would do honour to any period. Thus the greater part of the merit belongs to the Florentines, but not the whole. Giotto died in 1336, when painters had increased immensely. In 1290, the first society of artists in Venice was established, under the protection of St. Luke. They were not academies, but associations of artists, composed of engravers, painters, sculptors, and orifici. Their object was to advance design in all arts; and had they always continued to act on this honest and simple principle, we should not now have had to lament in Europe a race who are synonymous with every thing weak, mannered, and absurd in art.

The next distinguished artist was Buffalmaco. Although totally independent of Giotto, he was also intimate with Boccaccio. He was very capricious, and worked only when he liked, yet he was inferior to no one. He painted the Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Creation of the World in the Campo Santo; in fact, the Campo Santo seems to have been a receptacle for all the distinguished geniuses as they appeared in that age. In it there are things as fine in conception as were ever imagined; and the foundation of some of Raffaello's best compositions in the Vatican may be there found. Vasari's life of Buffalmaco is exceedingly entertaining, as indeed all his lives are.

The two Orcagnas, Andrea and Bernardo, were the next

artists of this early school. Andrea, painted the Judgment and the Inferno, in the Campo Santo. He was full of invention, but not equal to the Giotto school, though he first gave evidence of perspective. Lanzi thinks that the art did not advance so quickly after Giotto's death as it ought to have done. Taddeo Gaddi, his best pupil, was to him what Julio Romano was to Raffaello. Vasari, who saw his pictures in good condition, says, that he excelled his master in fleshiness and colour. Agnolo Gaddi the son of Taddeo, was a humble imitator of Giotto and his father, and had as his pupil Ceronino Cininni, whose treatise on the mechanical preparations of the art is very valuable. Fortunate would it have been had the treatises of Apelles and Euphranor also reached us.

Pisa now began to decline, and the Florentines took possession of that city in 1406. Hated and detested by their conquerors, the spirit of the citizens sunk into the greatest depression; the artists left the city, and the school entirely decayed. The Florentines now rose in the ascendant. The Medici began to appear. Cosimo, the father of his country and the protector of genius, gave fresh energy to art, science, and public affairs. Lorenzo followed, and their house became the refuge and resort of all who were celebrated in painting, poetry, sculpture, architecture, and philosophy. Massaccio, the two Piselli, the two Lippi, Binozzo, Sandro, and Ghirlandaio, received from the Medici protection and employment. The pictures of the time have perpetual portraits of the Medici. The citizens became animated with the same spirit; frescoes covered the churches, and smaller works filled the houses. Up sprung, too, that host of painters, marble-cutters, bronze-casters, and chasers, by which the principles of design passed from



Pisa to Florence ; and out blazed before the world Donatello, Brunelleschi, Ghiberti. The most exquisite productions of sculpture, marble, and bronze followed. The youth became inoculated ; sound design became the first necessity of manufacture ; and though the finest works of Italy at this or any period cannot be compared to the finest works of Greece, yet a good style of design was established, but unequal to those refined forms of beauty, so palpable in the merest fragments of the works of the school of Phidias, which have all the look of life without any of its vulgarities, all the essential details, without a single superfluous one. This cannot be said of the naked figures of the period in question, or of any period of Italian art, not even of the art of Michel Angelo and Raffaele. There was a want which Greek forms only supplied ; there was an absence of refinement, and a want of something which the Greeks possessed. Michel Angelo and Raffaele were educated without system. There was no school in Italy like the schools of Sicyon and Rhodes, Athens, and Corinth, where all the hidden secrets of perfect form were taught, that is, the secret of beauty. Michel Angelo and Raffaele owed their greatness to their own genius ; and their art died with them. There has been nothing in the world like the art of Phidias, except the poetry of Shakespeare. The intellectual powers and perceptive senses of the Greeks must have been several degrees more refined than those of all preceding or subsequent nations.

The followers of Giotto had advanced the art from infancy in colour, composition, and expression ; but in perspective, and light and shadow, they left it as they found it. Uccello had given symptoms of perspective, and Massolino da Panicale of light and shadow, until the appearance of Masso di S. Giovanni, a youth so immersed in study, so utterly ab-



sorbed in his divine art, that he neglected dress, health, food, sleep, and seemed only to be conscious of life when he touched a pencil. For this entire neglect of the humanities and comforts of life, the Italians, whose satirical turn is ever apparent, added *accio* to Masso, (*accio* affixed to any word exciting associations of dirt or ugliness,) so that *Massaccio* meant a dirty and neglectful man. Neglectful as he was, however, he was the immediate precursor of Raffaello; and all the great subsequent painters studied him. Raffaello borrowed from him Paul in Elymas, the Adam and the Eve in the Loggia, and other entire figures. Like Apollodorus, he opened the doors; and Raffaello having passed through, never forgot his obligations. Ghiberti and Donatello formed his style; from Brunaleschi he learnt proportion; and though the finest antiques were not known in his time, he improved himself by studying such as were in existence. The airs of his heads are *Raffaelloesque*, says Mengs; yet, would it not be more just to say, that Raffaello's heads are *Massaccioesque*? Raffaello died the favourite of a court, loved, lamented, and in competence. Massaccio so excited the envy of his inferiors, that it is suspected he was poisoned at the age of twenty-eight, before he had fairly taken his ground. Surely, then, when Massaccio is praised for what must have been his own, it is not quite fair to term his excellence, that of a man who came after him, and perhaps owed it to him. His works are at S. Ambrogio, and del Carmine in Florence, and St. Catherine in Rome. His heads are full of character, his drapery is beautifully composed, and his composition is unaffected, but his knowledge of the naked form is feeble and vulgar. Some of the heads of del Carmine are full of character like Holbein, with the same look of rigidity in expression; but he was a true genius, bene-

fitting by his predecessors, going beyond them, and enabling those who studied him to carry the art to the highest point it ever reached in Italy. Pietro Perrugino, Leonardo, Raffaele, and Michel Angelo, all studied and all were benefited by him. In the Palazzo Pitti there is a portrait of a young man who looks alive.

After several names of great merit, we reach one who advanced towards the great era ; we mean Domenicho Ghirlandaio, the master of Michel Angelo, a circumstance which alone is a passport to immortality. Fuseli says, that he was the first Florentine who added truth to composition by truth of perspective. The abolition of gold fringes in drapery may be dated from him ; though his historical figures are little more than portraits well-selected. The last important name of the first epoch of Italian art was that of Luca Signorelli, who had glimpses of real grandeur. His dome at Orvieto, where he painted the Last Judgment, has bold fore-shortening, with absurdities of an earlier date mixed up in it ; but Michel Angelo adopted many of his ideas, as well as Dante's ; and certainly the absurd assertion that he "disdained to look abroad for foreign help,"<sup>1</sup> is successfully refuted by this fact.

One can see how gradually art sunk after its decay into Gothicism ; how gradually it advanced again to nature and common sense, and from common sense to elevation. During this first period the approaches to ideal beauty, imperfect as it was in Italian art, were gradual, and would have been longer in coming had not the discovery of the Apollo, and other ancient works, opened the eyes of all the great men living, and a spring taken place from Perrugino, Ghirlandaio, and the Bellinis, which was soon visible in the works of Raf-

<sup>1</sup> Reynold's note.

faelle and Michel Angelo. Leonardo seems not to have been smitten by the ancients to the same degree as the other two were. There is less obligation to any nation in him ; and unquestionably few as are left of the effusions of his genius, they are more original than the Vatican or Sistine Chapel. What was there in the world to put us in mind of the Standard struggle or Last Supper of Da Vinci ?

But before proceeding, it may be as well to allude to the question of oil painting. It was long a supposition that Van Eyk discovered it, and that it was not known before ; whereas, it was used in England in 1230, long before the time of Van Eyk. Cennino Cennini wrote a treatise on the technical practice of the Italian painters ; he was a pupil of Agnolo Gaddi, who was a pupil of Taddeo Gaddi, who was a pupil of Giotto, who was a pupil of Cimabue, who was a pupil of the Greeks. There can be no question that from the mixture of oil with punic wax<sup>1</sup> as a varnish, the use of oil was known to the ancient Greeks, and that it was carried on to the tenth century, when the monk Theophilus<sup>2</sup> wrote his treatise. He positively describes how to mix the colour with oil instead of water, and how to boil the oil ; and then we can prove its existence by actual documents in the rolls of the Exchequer in England (1239), and by the 23d of Henry III., wherein the king issues an order to “ our treasurer Odo the goldsmith and his son, to be paid 117 shillings for *oil, varnish, and colors* bought, and for pictures made in the chamber of our Queen at Westminster,”<sup>3</sup> nearly

<sup>1</sup> Pliny, lib. xxxv. Cera punica cum oleo liquefacta.

<sup>2</sup> Lib. i. c. 18. Accipe semen lini et exsicca illud in sartagine super ignem sine aqua, &c. Again, “ cum hoc oleo tere minium, super lapidem ;” and again, “ accipe colores quos impone volvens, texens eos diligenter cum oleo lini.” (*De omni Scientia Artis Pingendi.*)

<sup>3</sup> Rot. Claus. 23d Henry III. Walpole's *Works*, vol. iii. p. 16.

two hundred years before Van Eyk. There can be no doubt that oil painting has never been unknown, even to the Egyptians ; it has been forgotten and revived, but none of the periods of revivals are entitled to the honour of discovery. “ Chaque nation a ses avantages, et ses désavantages,” said a Frenchman to us, whilst shrugging his shoulders as a spout of water from a roof drenched him to the skin in Paris ; and “ Ogni nazione ha le sue virtù, ha i suoi vizi,” says Lanzi. Every nation which confesses its vices, is sure to have justice done to its virtues. There is no Italian school, however good, which has not its errors, and none which has not its excellencies as well as its mistakes.

Florence was distinguished for fresco more than for oil painting. The Florentine style of design, in its best days, was always peculiar ; the figures were long in proportion, their feet were small, and so were their knees ; there was always a look, in Florentine design, as if the muscles of the body were suffering from a temporary knotted cramp ; they were, in design, too circular, too elliptical, or too angular, and never seemed to have hit the exact medium between all three, like Phidias. Their colour was not rich, like the Venetians ; their draperies clung too closely to the limb as if they were wet ; they made an ostentatious display of the limb underneath ; in fact their system degenerated into manner, and beauty seems not to have been a primary object in the Florentine school, any more than in that of their ancestors the Etruscans. At Fountainbleau, though the designs of Primaticcio were full of talent, yet they gave a very good idea of the excess of the Florentine manner.<sup>1</sup> The two great luminaries of Florence were Da Vinci and

<sup>1</sup> In 1814, the writer saw the remains. There was a naked youth over one of the gateways, which had all the peculiarities of this school.

Michel Angelo. Da Vinci was less of a mannerist than the other great man. He was, in fact, the link between the meagerness of the first period of design, and the vulgar swing of the second.

Leonardo was born in 1452. He was a natural son, and had all the eccentricity, sloth and fire, weakness and energy, idleness and diligence of that class. A poet, a musician, a mathematician, an hydraulist, a mechanic, a modeller, and a painter; he excelled in all. Keen, eager, minute, searching and indefatigable, handsome in face, beautiful in person, tall in figure, athletic and skilled in manly exercises, a graceful dancer, a splendid horseman, and an harmonious singer; he equally delighted the people, infatuated the women, and bewitched the sovereign. And yet with all this vast power, the gift of his Creator, he was so deficient in concentration of mind, that he seemed to have no power of collecting its rays sufficiently long to make discoveries in any thing. He was the scholar of Verocchio, by whom he was infected with a lazy love of design in preference to the vigorous energy of using the brush. He passionately loved geometry, horses, and soldiers; and in his horses he never left nature like Raffaele, Julio Romano, or Michel Angelo, but gave them their natural characteristics of fleshy nostrils and projecting eyes.

His two greatest works are his Last Supper, and his Battle of the Standard. The beautiful humility of Christ, the tender amiability of St. John, the powerful expressions of all the apostles waving to and fro in their attitudes, as if disturbed in their feelings, by the remark of Christ, that "one of them should betray him," prove the extent of his genius, and the depth of his perceptions. But even here, the bane of his existence, that disposition to experiment, has ruined the



work, more from the consequences of his own preparations, than either time or damp. Such men are never regarded as steady lights by posterity; painting was only a portion of his occupations, and not the end of his life. One quarter of the lives of such men is spent in experiments; another quarter in putting them in practice; a third in lamenting their failure; and the last amidst the bitterest remorse, devoting themselves to their real pursuit, to satisfy the cravings of conscience and the reproach of the world. What has Leonardo left us in all his various pursuits to compensate us for the loss which accrued to painting? Geometry was as much a caprice of his extraordinary mind, as any other science. What has he left us in poetry, which poets could look up to? What in mechanics, that Watt could have founded on? What in music, that would have benefitted Mozart? What in hydraulics, that would improve our shares in canals? The genius that composed such works as the *Standard* and *Last Supper*, need not to have shrunk from competition with Michel Angelo, young as he was. There is no doubt the world is always delighted to pull down an established artist by pushing up a younger rival in his face; but if you become irritable, and desert your country from disgust, men only laugh; whereas the sound principle is, Laugh at the world, stay in your country, and work harder than ever.

The fact is, that such men as Leonardo are great geniuses, but not the greatest. The evidence of superior genius is the power of intellectual concentration. Such powers had Newton, Milton, Bacon, Locke, Watt, Michel Angelo, Napoleon, Raffaello, Titian, Rubens, Vandyke, and our own Reynolds. Such men only are examples, and not beacons; such men only are blessings to their species. As a speci-



men of his extraordinary caprice of character, his want of perseverance, and his notions of the most elaborate finish were at least equal; he took four years in painting one face, and then said it was not done. His children are exquisite; but his women have an air of modesty to conceal meritriciousness, and his oil-works are far from models of excellence, the over-wrought finish being hard. There is always in his expressions an air as if they were set in enamel, and could not relax. The picture, in our national gallery, of Christ and the Doctors, is a celebrated work; but why should Christ, who disputed with the doctors at twelve years of age, be larger in person and head than the doctors who are sixty? And why should Christ be like a woman in men's clothes, and look out of the picture, and talk with his fingers to the spectators, instead of being, as he was, a fine boy of twelve years old, handsome, intellectual and angelic? We should like to have heard Leonardo's reasons, if he had any, for such an apparent absurdity.

In design, and tempera or fresco-painting, Da Vinci was great; but in oil pictures he is false in taste, petty in execution, and unskilful in backgrounds. By his depth of light and shade, and also of colour, which gave an impulse to all Italian art, he had a sense of beauty which greater steadiness might have brought out to perfection. But when a man flies off from painting to make a lion, which will walk by machinery, to meet the king of France who approached Milan, to stand upon his hind legs without human help, to open his own belly, and show the king of France his arms inside it, what could be expected from his talents, great as they were? Nowhere does his character show itself more conspicuously than in his treatise on painting; in fact it is not a treatise, but a collection of separate disjointed thoughts, like the re-

cipes of a cookery book. It is very easy to put down your thoughts as they occur without arrangement ; but the difficulty is, to collect them for the illustration of a principle like Fuseli or Reynolds. Every man can put down separate thoughts, but every man has not the power so to arrange them as to throw light upon an art. Leonardo dissected and drew finely ; but there was a meagre common-model style in his figures, a want of perfect construction, as if men had never worn clothes. On the whole, this illustrious man cannot be referred to as the head of an epoch. He was a component part of it, but not like Michel Angelo or Raffaele the great engineer. What he did in painting made one lament that he had not done more. "An artist," says Reynolds in his letter to Barry, "should bring his mind to bear on painting, from the moment he rises till he goes to bed ; and if his mind be calm and undisturbed by other objects, he will find it quite enough to fill up life, if it was longer than it is."

No man could be more opposite to Leonardo, than his great successor Michel Angelo, patient, laborious, virtuous and indefatigable, painter, architect and sculptor ; he left a work in each art that advanced the rank of his country. To turn to such a character, is a relief and a blessing. In him the aspiring youth contemplates the result of conduct totally the reverse of that we have been considering. Solitary, and highly gifted, despising the subterfuges of society, he lived alone ; and in addition to his genius he was a great moral being. Brought up by the liberality of Lorenzo de' Medici, admitted freely at his table with the illustrious men of the day, Michel Angelo had every advantage in early education. He came, too, when he was wanted ; when ancient literature and ancient art were breaking through the obscu-

rity which had overwhelmed them, and the discovery of printing was scattering their beauties throughout Europe. Men's minds were roused up with wonder and delight at every fresh discovery. Painting, architecture, poetry, and science were hailed with a gusto which nothing can account for but the misery of the ages that had passed.

Michel Angelo, after his day's study in the gardens which Lorenzo had opened for the youth of Florence, retired to the coins, cameos, and fragments of the palace. With his acuteness, energy, and perception, it is not wonderful that he soon perceived the inferiority of the forms of his master, in comparison with the full beauty of the form, the result of perfect construction in the antique. He corrected with his boyish hand the narrow meagreness of Ghirlandio; and announced, thus early, that self-will and vigorous decision, which enabled him subsequently to accomplish whatever he undertook. Here was the germ of that mighty power which placed the Pantheon in the air, as he predicted and realized in the dome of St. Peter's. Here was the embryo fearlessness, that brought him through the vast ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in fresco, though when he began it, he had never painted in fresco before. Michel Angelo was one of those rare beings who are wanted when they come, and have opportunities put in their way adequate to develop the powers with which they are gifted. Julius II. was as wonderful a man as Michel Angelo; and they mutually inspired each other. What Julius willed, Michel Angelo was as ready to perform; and what the inspirations of Michel Angelo's genius suggested, the vigorous pope, whose fine old venerable head a helmet would have suited better than a tiara, had comprehension to value. They were both fierce, both self-willed, both proud and haughty, both inde-

pendent and ungovernable. If Julius wished what Michel Angelo was in no humour to do, he would not do it ; and if Michel Angelo wanted to execute, on sound principles of art, what the aged pontiff did not comprehend, he would do it, in spite of denunciations of banishment, or threats of displeasure. They were made for each other, they understood each other, and they were attached to each other ; they quarrelled, became friends, and quarrelled again. "When will the ceiling be finished ?" said Julius, as he trod on the scaffolding with a stamp that made the boards tremble, after climbing to the top, where the great artist lay on his back on a mattress, hard at work, painting with vigour. "When I can," said Michel Angelo, irritated at the interruption. "When thou canst," thundered out the pope ; "Art thou minded to be hanged ?"

This was the man for Michel Angelo. Conscious of his age, conscious that death followed him wherever he went, he began, proceeded with, and finished all he undertook, as if he had not an hour to live. By his perpetual watching, he hurried Michel Angelo through the ceiling of the chapel in twenty months, a time by no means equal to that which ought to have been devoted to it. The hurry is visible in the fierce, rapid execution ; and that which was entirely owing to the impetuosity of his old patron, has been attributed as a merit and a principle to the great painter. Such is the infatuation of praise when a man is really great. Of this astonishing work, it seems that enough can never be said ; though language has been exhausted to do it justice. Fuseli was the first who cleared up the mystery of the composition, in a style that places the commentator on a level with the inventor. "It exhibits," he says, "the origin, the progress, and the final dispensation of theocracy." But Fuseli's cha-

racter of Michel Angelo is overdone. It is an effort to express the deepest feelings in the strongest language ; and in all such efforts the language invariably becomes inflated and turgid.

In comparing this illustrious sovereign of modern design with Phidias, or the Greeks generally, in the naked figure, he must unquestionably yield to them the palm. Michel Angelo often perplexed his limbs with useless anatomy ; it must not be denied, and cannot be refuted, that he did not always clear the accidental from the superfluous. If the principle be a sound one, namely, " that any two parts of a body bearing comparison must keep a consistency throughout, similar in essence and similar in development," then is Michel Angelo grossly inconsistent ; because if the spine of the ilium in front be covered fully by the muscles around it, so ought the spine of the scapula behind to be equally covered. If the former be, and the latter be not, then the figure is inharmonious and inconsistent, and what Phidias would never have tolerated. Now the figure of Michel Angelo's Christ standing with a cross, has the spine of the scapula prominent and bony, and all the muscles shrinking from it, the characteristics of a thin man ; whilst the spine of the ilium of the same figure in front, is entirely covered by the muscles around it, the marks of a muscular and fleshy man. What authority had Michel Angelo in nature or antiquity for such inconsistency ? These are the excesses which bring dissection into contempt, and which induce anatomists to doubt whether the Greeks dissected or not, because they were never guilty of such absurdities, and because they had too much self-control to make that an end of art which was but a means of the perfection of art. And yet Vasari calls it " mirabilissima." This figure



and the Lazarus in Piombo's, as well as several figures in the Last Judgment, are justifiable grounds for asserting he was not equal to the Greeks in the naked figure ; though in the conception and arrangement of a vast whole to illustrate a grand principle, he approaches but does not surpass the Parthenon in its glories. In the form he must not be compared to the Greeks ; gigantic as he is, he was decidedly inferior.

Michel Angelo's line is by no means "uniformly grand;" and his women may be "moulds of generation," but certainly not of love. His infants may "teem with the man," but they have nothing of the infant. His men may be a "race of giants," but they are brutal in expression, fierce in action, and distorted in position. It is useless in a rapid and general view of art to go over ground which has been so often gone over before ; to talk about the prophets and sibyls, after three hundred years' enthusiasm, is worse than useless. Europe knows the awful grandeur of one or two of them, looking like beings to whom God has spoken, and who have never since ceased meditating on the awful voice.

The style of Michel Angelo has been called the style of the gods ; but if majesty without pretension, humility without feebleness, power without exertion, and an awful presence without vulgar assumption, be the characteristics of a god, what figure of Michel Angelo's deserves that appellation ? Is it in the bullying defiance of Moses ? the twisted tortures of Jonah ? the cramped agonies of the sleeping Adam ? or the galvanized violence of the ornamental figures at the tombs ? It must be admitted, that the *Penoso-Duca* is majestic and silent ; but this is an exception, not an habitual characteristic. "Michel Angelo's mind," says Reynolds, "was so original that he disdained to look abroad for foreign help." Disdained ! Why there is not a



prophet, a sibyl, or a naked figure in the whole chapel where the torso cannot be traced. And what are the works of both Michel Angelo and Raffaello, but improved completions of all that their predecessors had done for a thousand years in barbarism and obscurity? Shakespeare's plots are all borrowed; Lady Macbeth is not his own; that hideous expression "know Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripped," is Hollingshed's. But what of that? It is the new thoughts he puts into them, which give him claim to the sympathy of the world. Phidias and Raffaello have one great and decided beauty in their works; their figures, whether in action or expression, always look as the unconscious agents of an impulsion they cannot help. You are never drawn aside from what they are doing by any appearance in them, as if they wished to make you consider how very grand they were, or how very gracefully they were moving. They seem impelled by something they cannot controul; their heads, hands, feet, and bodies immediately put themselves into positions the best adapted to execute the intentions wanted; whereas *often* in Michel Angelo, and *always* in his imitators, there is a consciousness as it were in his arms and limbs, which destroys all idea, as if his figures were the unconscious agents of an impulsion they could not help, and which acted by means of the will on the muscular system.

It is an inherent principle of life never to disturb itself for grace, or for any other object either in action or repose, not immediately the natural consequence of the impulsion which moved the body. Style in design is a *result* and not a *cause*. Whatever object is represented in painting or sculpture, the intentions of God in its bodily formation should be ascertained; the means which God has bestow-

ed on it to enable it to execute its only will or gratify its own instincts, should be investigated ; and then the aberrations produced by time, accident or disease, or other causes, will be clearly known, so that he who takes upon himself to represent any object in painting, will be able to distinguish accident from essence, and shew the object in its essential properties of body as God first created it. The external form in that body will then be *essential*, and the result of its completion in art will be *style* in design. There are certain inherent principles of our common nature to which all bodies must yield, viz. that compression and extension must have different effects, and so must repose and action. If a great artist represents a figure and makes its parts the same in either case, he must be ignorant of nature or above its simplicity. No doubt, the conception of an idea may be so grand, the beauty of a character may be so angelic, the pathos of an expression may be so deep, that errors or inadequacy in the mode of representation may be overlooked or forgiven ; but in order to bring the art to the perfection to which the Greeks brought it, there must be nothing to forgive or to overlook. An idea or conception being the nobler part of the art, we may, in our common conviction of human frailty, *overlook* any inadequacy in the means of imitation ; but the very admission proves there must be something to be overlooked and something which, we have a notion, has not been adequately represented.

An art the modes of which to convey thoughts, being the imitation essentially of natural objects, ought surely to have the imitation perfect, because the imperfection of the means has always detracted from the impressions of the thought. Poets are not endured if their grammar is bad, or their lan-

guage defective ; and why should drawing, form, colour, or light, shadow, and surface, the grammar of art, be excused more than the poets' ? Because the simplest imitation is at once recognised as the imitation of the prototype, why should facility of imitation be any excuse for defect ? Ah, but its the *grand* style. Yes, the grand style of Europe for the last three hundred years ; but was it the grand style of the Greeks ? Certainly not ; their grand style was nature elevated not violated, with none of her inherent bases of life altered a hair's point, none of her essential details omitted, and none of her essential principles overwhelmed by useless detail.

When you see an outline like iron, that is the grand style. When hands were twisted, heads distorted, one leg up, and the other so far removed from the body, that you may question if it will return, that is the *grand style*. All this absurdity originated with Michel Angelo ; and though he is not answerable for the excesses of his admirers, there must be something erroneous if every imitator has led to such extravagance from Goltzius downwards. Michel Angelo was a tremendous genius, and his effect on the art was vital ; but he did not like the Greeks suffer the unalterable principles of life to keep in check his anatomical knowledge. This was an error, because we can imagine no beings, and no world where malleable matter is not influenced by the common principles of the solar system, or where any creatures composed of bones, muscles, tendons, and skin, must not yield to the laws which God instituted for their government when he created them.

Thus Michel Angelo often overstepped the modesty of truth, and gave a swaggering air to his figures. Every figure of his looks as if he was insulted and preparing to re-

turn a blow. If they sleep they seem as if they would kick ; if they move when they are awake, they seem as if all their muscles were cracking. We allude particularly to the naked figures ; Jeremiah and the Duke are exceptions, but they are only exceptions. Fuseli observed that Michel Angelo was the *salt of art* ; but it would have been more just to have called him the *pepper*, because very little indeed will do for a seasoning. In poetry of sentiment the Medici tombs would perhaps have competed with Phidias ; for Michel Angelo being a painter as well as Phidias, he combined in his sculpture a knowledge of effect. In selection of subject and daring execution of hand, perhaps the Sistine Chapel might equal the great works of painting amongst the ancients ; but in naked representations *it cannot be compared to it*. The Elgin marbles had not then enlightened the world. The due subordination of all science to nature had not then been so exquisitely seen ; the due combination of life without meanness, and of abstraction without losing sight of life, were not so apparent in the great works of ancient art which were found before this period. Had Michel Angelo seen the Theseus and Ilyssus, Jupiter's breast and horse's head, he would have felt the difference between the muscular swing of a blacksmith, and a hero naturally born powerful, without his muscles being distorted by manual labour ; and that a hero might be elevated and yet simple, fleshy without fatness, and muscular without being skinny. Michel Angelo has been called the Deity of design ; but he was rather the Devil. One can imagine the consternation of Phidias and his pupils, if suddenly at Athens the galvanized figures of the tombs had been let down through the roof, whilst they were preparing the Olympian Jupiter, with his quiet, solemn, steady, thinking, peaceful, awful look.

Reynolds says he prepared the way for the sweeping outline of Rubens; but how many thousands has he ruined? What is the excellence of the Last Judgment? Is there any evidence of power in arranging a whole, like Rubens, Titian, or Tintoretto? Is there any application of any principle of our nature by the due combination of variety and repose? Is it not a mass of separate groups, vulgar in design, academic in action, and demoniac in expression? Is the Christ worthy of Goltzius? Surely it would have disgraced him, and then what devils! Are these the fallen angels of heaven? they are the legitimate offspring of hell. Are these the beings whose glory was obscured, not extinguished? whose majestic forms existed, though in ruin? whose beauty was only disturbed by passions, not destroyed? who were the same grand, heroic, terrific beings as ever, but scathed by lightning, singed by fire, dingy from darkness, lacerated by thunder, their splendour sparkling through the horrid obscurity, in which they meditated revenge? To give them mouths like wolves, ears like asses, noses like pug-dogs, and tails like monkeys, with feet cloven and misshapen, was not to represent a fallen angel, but a deformed monster. Though evil, they were beautiful.

“ — Their forms had not yet lost  
*All* their original brightness.”

“What matter where, if still I be the same?” says Satan. Could such a sentiment have ever been uttered by the wretch who is dragging a figure down to the bottomless pit, in a way delicacy forbids one even to think of, much more to write or to paint? Michel Angelo’s demons would not only torture the damned, but feed upon their bodies.

It is clear, however, that there *was* a time when he was



not so exaggerated. The holy Family, in sculpture, brought by Sir George Beaumont from Italy, is playful, natural, simple, and beautiful ; it is in fact a divine work. Perhaps the violence of Julius in hurrying him through the Sistine Chapel, and the necessity of painting with tremendous exaggeration, on so large a space, got his hand into a fierce power that it never lost. Painting on grand ceilings is like talking in large theatres. He never entirely finished any thing ; he left no grand pupils, like Raffaelle ; he assisted the humble, but never instructed the gifted. The figure of Lazarus in our national picture, especially the hand and thumb that press the shoulder of the attendant on the left side, is certainly by him ; and if it be compared to the timid painting of the Christ, the spectator will be convinced of it. In fine, Michel Angelo was a great genius ; but let the students of Europe be assured that his style has been grossly overrated ; let them banish his works from their eyes, and substitute the Theseus and Ilyssus, and the real grand natural style of Phidias will soon exclude the satanic Etruscan, and violent anatomical distortions of Michel Angelo. He may be and was a giant in art ; but Raffaelle was an angel, and Phidias a god.

The next Florentine of power was the monk Bartolomeo. He studied under Rosselli, and Leonardo aroused and excited him ; he was grand in colour, light and shadow, and execution, surface, and character. In the Louvre there were works worthy of any hand, any competitor, or any genius. He had the honour of advancing Raffaelle ; he invented the long figure, and made the proper use of it ; he never put drapery on it till he had drawn the naked figure first, so that the naked parts affected the forms of his folds ; he had great depth, grandeur, and a certain wildness of air ; he drew



finely, and his tones were solemn and elevated. Wilkie speaks with the highest enthusiasm of his Assumption of the Virgin. It is impossible not to feel the deepest interest in Bartolomeo, and not to be astonished that he did not found a school, and head an epoch. Such things, however, are never done by the mere influence of talent; the character of the man is principally though not wholly the cause. He painted a S. Sebastiano, which was so beautiful, that it became a favourite of Italian ladies. He was ordered to adorn the great hall of council at Florence, as Da Vinci and Michel Angelo had done before; but as if a fatality attended that hall, he died without going further than the designs. This is curious. Da Vinci designed the Standard struggle; Michel Angelo the group of soldiers alarmed by the trumpet, and dressing themselves; and now Bartolomeo began his designs, and died in 1517, without completing them. Bartolomeo was a great artist. His method was first to draw the naked figure, then clothe it, then paint the whole picture in light and shade in oil, and then tone and colour, guided by the tremendous depth of his first impasto painting.

Andrea Del Sarto is another name enthusiastically over-rated by Vasari. He might be called Andrea senza errori; but what genius "senza errori," ever enchanted the world? Give us the vigour of Michel Angelo, with all his violence, the dash of Tintoretto with all his caprice, the colour of Titian with his want of drawing at first, the sweetness of Corregio with his namby-pamby men, the composition of Rubens with his flabby women, the expression of Raffaele with his hardness of effect; but spare us from that poet, painter, musician, or moral character, who is so perfect that he must be admired without the gusto of finding fault; above all, spare us from the Grandisons of art. Andrea was

one of those to whom talent is more applicable than genius ; whatever excellence he attained, he would have never attained to that degree, but for the existence of his superiors. The greater part of the works attributed to him in England, are copies by his pupils which he retouched.

After these great men, it would be useless to detail the decay of the Florentine school ; it yielded to the circumstances of the time, and the misfortunes of the Medici. The continual political squabbles turned men's minds from art as in ancient Greece ; but the great want of course was the want of genius, which no efforts have since been able to rear. Though the style of the Florentine school was not so pure as that of the Roman, it led the way in a noble manner, and kept side by side with it ; they benefited each other. Leonardo gave an impulse to art ; and though from the caprice of his character, he did not complete the impulse he had given, and was more the cause of greatness in others, than the man who established his own, yet the art is indebted to this highly-gifted man, who had an effect on Giorgione, Bartolomeo, Raffaello, and Michel Angelo himself ; and gratitude is due to his genius. This great school was brought to utter ruin by what Lanzi calls the Cortoneschi, or pupils of Cortona, where art had degenerated into mechanism, and thoughtless, endless, and sprawling groups. The descendants of the Medici breed had more disposition than power to patronise, till Leopold reigned in 1765. The academy was renovated in 1785, and once more in 1804 ; but these renovations end in nothing. The great men were passed without these conventional distinctions ; the little ones who came after, live only by their embellishment. Boys are educated to draw tolerably well, to colour with tolerable harmony, to invent tolerably insipidly, to become intolerable painters, accom-

plished academicians, to die, be buried, and decay; and thus leave room for another race as intolerably imbecile in art, as their illustrious performers before them. It is quite absurd to read in Lanzi, always at the end of the epochs of a school, "*Decadenza dell' arte, e fondazione dell' academia per avivvarla*;" "decay of art, and foundation of an academy, to give it life." But after a few galvanic twitches it stretches out its feeble legs, gasps with an expiring quickness, gives a trembling of its eyelids, which it opens once more, stares with a fixed look, sighs deeply, and drops its jaw for ever. Then come the vain efforts to restore circulation, then the delusive assurances that it is still living; then doctors and nurses dress up its helpless head with laurel, and put some abracadabra on its cold breast; but all won't do for it's gone and there is no hope. Such have been the results of the academies. Genius fled at their foundation, and left them useless bodies without soul, life, or circulation. The sovereigns of Europe will at last find out that no academies should go further than schools; and till they do, the end of art will be forgotten, in a vain contemptible struggle for its conventional distinctions.

The three leading lights of art as schools, are the Florentine, the Roman, and the Venetian. The Parman must in spite of all the beauty of Corregio, be considered as the beginning of corruption. The other schools, the Modenese, the Cremonese, the Ferrarese, Genoese, and the Piedmontese, are but different branches.

The glory of Italian art is Raffaello. Had he been born in Greece, and qualified by a Greek education, he would have been as great in painting as Phidias was in sculpture; but the education of all the Italian artists was imperfect, and they seemed to be grounding themselves, (even Raffaello

himself,) on the meagre style of the early painters. The discovery of ancient statues in some degree opened their eyes, but they were not, like the ancients, gradually prepared for such perfection, nor was Raffaelle himself ever skilled in those perfect principles of beauty, as applied to the naked figure, which distinguished the Greeks. Wonderful, amiable, and gentle creature as he was, the reverse of Michel Angelo in every way, he proved himself decidedly the inferior man. In all his endless inventions, a single repetition of himself, even in the folds of a drapery, is not to be found; he was not like Titian, an exquisite colourist, but his colour is always agreeable, though not distinguished for light and shade; and his groups are never obtrusive, though not remarkable for aërial perspective. Every object keeps its place; though no face of his can compete with the beauty of the ancients, his women always enchant; his great power was character and expression, and telling a story by human passions and actions; in these he was unrivalled in modern art, and not surpassed by the ancients. His father being a painter, he was bred up in the art; and his master Perrugino, was a great man in his way, though somewhat of a Goth. In style, therefore, Raffaelle lost time with him; but could he have gone in early life to such a school as Sicyon, there is no knowing to what a pitch of perfection he might have carried the art. His latter excellence is entirely owing to his own sense, based on the antique; for most of what he learnt from Perrugino he had afterwards to unlearn. He entered the Vatican at twenty-five, and died at thirty-seven. What then must have been his diligence, his devotion, and his genius! In any history of painting, at this time of day, to talk of the subjects of the Vatican, or the Madonnas, so often copied, so often engraved, so often seen, so often praised, would be tres-

passing on the temper of the reader. His character, as well as that of his art, was the very converse of Michel Angelo. Michel Angelo envied his equals, was kind to his inferiors, and always insulting to his superiors; whilst Raffaele was kind to all, and the idol of the society in which he moved. Michel Angelo associated with no men but admirers. The consequence was that his life was written by his flatterers Condivi and Vasari, a great portion, perhaps, delicately insinuated by himself; and, as might be expected, they have sacrificed Raffaele to the Dagon of their idolatry. Vasari insinuated that Raffaele was greatly indebted to Michel Angelo; and Reynolds following Vasari and Condivi, goes farther than either, asserting that Raffaele owed his *existence* to Michel Angelo. Was there ever such gratuitous assumption? If it means any thing, it means that but for Michel Angelo, his genius would never have been developed. Is such an absurdity worthy of Reynold's understanding? Surely not, and in fact it can be made clear that Raffaele did not owe his existence to Michel Angelo. If he owed any thing to that great artist, he owed the corruption of his own pure style. After the Capella Sistina was opened, Raffaele, bit like every body else by its heavy, cumbrous, vulgar, broad, and circular design, immediately tried it; but it did not suit his beautiful nature any more than it would have suited the elliptical beauty of the heroic forms of Greece.

What does Reynolds mean when he says, that "Raffaele had more taste and fancy, Michel Angelo more genius and imagination?" If genius be nothing more than the ordinary faculties of men carried to a greater pitch of intensity than ordinary men possess them, wherein had Michel Angelo more genius than Raffaele? Their geniuses were both equal; but the road which each took for the exercise of his



genius was different. Raffaello excelled in expressing the passions ; Michel Angelo in sublimity of character, independently of all passion and emotion. Though the materials of Raffaello's art are generally borrowed, are they more so than Michel Angelo's ? Is not Michel Angelo as much indebted to Luca Signorelli and the Campo Santo, for his choice of subjects in the Sistine, as Raffaello is in the Vatican ? This does not invalidate their genius ; whilst their predecessors were the root, the stem, the leaves, and the bud, they were the full blown flower. Michel Angelo was a great genius, and so was Raffaello ; but each owed his genius to a power totally independent of the other. Their geniuses were equal, their temperaments different. Raffaello was at the mercy of pleasure ; Michel Angelo disdained it : Raffaello was made for society ; Michel Angelo despised it. In Raffaello's works there is a geniality of soul with which every man's and woman's heart beats in sympathy ; whilst we have no sympathy with the characters of Michel Angelo, who overwhelms our imaginations, but never touches our hearts. We are awed by his Sibyls, but we could never think of loving them ; and his demons are surely unworthy of the fiery solitudes of hell. How could Ariosto say of him,

“ Michel, piu che mortel,  
Angel divino ;”

and then herd up Raffaello with Sebastian and inferior men ; Michel Angelo was perhaps the more moral man of the two, but not the greater painter.

Vasari and Condivi would never have been allowed to publish their falsehoods, as Lanzi says, had Raffaello been living ; but where were Julio Romano, Luca Penni, and



Polidoro, whom Raffaello had raised from a mason's boy to a great painter? Where were they? where were his "dear pupils?" "Let no man," says Johnson, "look for influence beyond his grave." Vasari asserts that Michel Angelo, in flying to Florence, when he quarrelled with Pope Julius II., left the keys of the Sistine Chapel, which he was then painting, to Bramante, Raffaello's uncle, who dishonourably let in Raffaello; and that the latter, on seeing the grand design of the prophets, changed his whole style. This absurdity was current in Europe for two hundred and fifty years, till Lanzi, with his usual acuteness, opened the eyes of the world. Would any one believe, that when Michel Angelo fled to Florence, it was in 1506, years before Raffaello ever entered Rome, and four or five before the chapel was ever begun or painted? It may be presumed that Raffaello did not surreptitiously derive any advantage from works four years before they were conceived or painted; and we conceive that Bramante could not give Raffaello the keys to open a door which was never locked, especially as Michel Angelo did not leave any keys, if ever he left them at all, till four years after the time Vasari dates as the period. The prophet Esaias which Vasari says shewed an alteration of style in consequence of the stolen views of works which were not in existence, was painted one or two years before Michel Angelo touched this very chapel. So much for Vasari's sacrifice of Raffaello to the great Dagon of his idolatry; and so much for Reynold's absurd and unthinking assertion, that "but for Michel Angelo, Raffaello would never have existed." Vasari's is a delightful book, and all his principles of art are sound, for they are the result of conversations with the greatest men; he was most intimate with Michel Angelo, and Titian, and all the great artists

of the day, and constantly in their painting-rooms, at their tables, and in their society.

In the first years of Raffaello, his feeling was so completely Perruginò's, that it was almost impossible to distinguish their works ; though there is a difference in feeling, and that difference is in favour of the pupil. In the Louvre were three of his early works of cabinet size. The Annunciation was one of these ; and more grace, innocence, or sweetness, were never put on canvass. Raffaello's pencil seemed always to melt when he approached a woman or an angel. What an age of genius this was, and how nearly all the great men seemed to come together. Da Vinci was born in 1452, Bartolemeo in 1469, Michel Angelo in 1474, Titian in 1480, and Raffaello in 1483.

In a rapid and concise history of art to detail the inferior names, who gradually by little and little, conduce to the ultimate expansion of genius, is impossible. A historian of this description has only time for leading points, or headlands in the voyage ; he has not leisure to dive into every little cape, bay, and projection, which by degrees, push the mainland into the ocean. The older painters of the Roman school will not add much to the interest of the art ; and a fair estimation of Raffaello and his glorious school, is much more likely to benefit the student, and instruct the general reader. It is not, on the whole, morally just ; but many eminent men become thus swallowed up in the blaze of their successors. As Shakespeare nearly deadens all feeling for previous excellence, so does Raffaello, though Shakespeare, Michel Angelo, Raffaello, and Titian were all indebted to their predecessors.

If Julius was adapted for Michel Angelo, Leo X. was peculiarly so for Raffaello ; though Mengs says that the hon-

ours and indulgences he received from Leo, made him luxurious and idle, and that he was not so industrious as during the short reign of his first patron Julius. Yet his rapid advance from the first picture he painted in the Vatican, to the Heliodorus, is extraordinary ; and, as according to Vasari, he sent artists to draw for him in Greece, there is no doubt that he had a sketch of the pediment of the Parthenon, before it was blown up, and that the Heliodorus is but a skilful adaptation of the Ilyssus. He was so much overwhelmed by employment and honours, that his latter works in the Vatican were wholly placed in the hands of his pupils, and carried on with the spirit of a manufactory. He was then appointed architect to St. Peter's at the death of St. Gallo, which distracted his thoughts. Incessant application, and incessant thinking of course weakened his delicate frame, nor did the capricious and harrassing attendances on such a court increase his strength ; added to which the maddening love of women for one so highly gifted and so handsome, his own devoted passion for Fornarina, and the endless demands on his brain, brought him to the grave at thirty-seven, absolutely borne down, like Byron, by excitement of every description, nervous, bodily and mental. This is the way with the world ; they kill a favourite by kindness, and an offender by cruelty.

In some life of him an attempt was made to prove that he caught cold by hurrying from his work to the palace at the Pope's order, and standing while in a profuse perspiration in a draught. But that is no refutation of the previous causes ; the question is, what prepared him to be killed by such a cause ? Incessant work and dissipation ; no painter can do both. Of course princes must be obeyed at any expense ; they seem to feel little for their dependants, as if in revenge

for being themselves deprived of so many enjoyments by ceremony and etiquette. Napoleon used to take great delight in never suffering old German maids of honour with fifty quarters in their arms to sit in his presence.

His last work, according to Mengs, was his Transfiguration in oil, a work deficient in masterly execution, and having a aboured look of smoothness. In drapery, in character, and in expression it was fine ; but in the Louvre it looked small. By the side of Corregio, it seemed hard ; by that of Titian, raw ; by that of Tintoretto, tame ; and the Christ's head was not equal to Corregio's at the National Gallery. It was not an example to hold forth to a young man as faultless. The Cartoons at Hampton are finer in point of execution alone ; they are his finest works for all the requisites of art. He was not restrained by designing for tapestry ; his genius was put forth with a Venetian power of brush ; and there are heads equal to any, especially the frightened woman's head in the Ananias, in these wonderful works.

In beauty he was far inferior to the Greeks ; in form he could not approach them ; in composition he was perfect ; in expression, deep ; and in telling a story, without a rival. Taking into consideration all the great men in modern art, this young man, not highly educated like Rubens, must be placed on the throne, till one arises who shall have what he had not, in addition to his own perfections ; and that young man will probably arise in Britain. He was an extraordinary creature ; modest, timid, and amiable ; affectionate to his equals, and gentle to the highly-born, his premature death gave a shock to Rome, which those only can estimate, who know the depth of Italian sensibilities. But did he die too young ? Not at all. He might have decayed, or he might have become more luxurious and more

neglectful. No man dies too young who dies with all the sympathies of the world unexhausted about him. The *furor Raphaelis* is the best species of fury that can seize a young student. He has no manner, no affection, no vice, no grand style ; all is simple, natural, and unaffected. His women are creatures of gentleness and love, though none are perfectly handsome. Perhaps he was more adapted for the characteristic heads of apostles than the naked forms of Greece ; in fact he was a great Christian painter, and seemed born to extend the influence of Christianity by his art.

His father being a painter, he began early of course, and at sixteen, had painted a picture at Castello, the composition of which was in advance of the age. At seventeen he painted another of the Virgin and child. In the Sacristy, at Sienna, he assisted Pinturichio with designs ; in 1504, he went to Florence, where Michel Angelo and Da Vinci were making a great noise with their cartoons for the hall ; he studied both, and improved his perspective and colour, in connexion with Bartolomeo. When Bramante, his uncle, who was architect to the Pope, advised his Holiness to send for Raffaele, the pope consented ; and in April 1508, Raffaele entered Rome, and was admitted into the Vatican.

From the continual occupations of Raffaele in his art from boyhood upwards, he could not have had a classical education to any great extent. He knew a little Latin, as all Catholics did ; but he was intimate with Bembo, Castiglione, Ariosto, and Aretino ; and these men must have helped him in historical or philosophical knowledge, or moral allegory, for the completion of his great works. Raffaele left a noble school ; and as soon as grief for the loss of their master had subsided, his pupils set about completing the works he left unfinished. The battle of Constantine was



done by Julio Romano and Perino del Vaga. As Raffaele lay in state, the Transfiguration was placed at the head of his coffin.

Julio Romano was the most eminent of his pupils. With vast poetry of mind, he did things in a style of execution, which renders him the purest poet in his art. His sun setting, and moon rising over our heads, in the Palazzo del T, is nowhere equalled or approached. Though he put forth his genius at Mantua, he was a Roman in practice, and to Raffaele owed the elements of his art. His colour was crude and his execution harsh ; yet no one can fail to see in his works, the real poetry of painting. Polidoro was another great man of the same school. He was originally a mason's boy, and used to prepare the walls for fresco ; but he got interested in seeing the young men at work, tried to draw himself, and Raffaele having assisted him, he became an eminent painter.

It is interesting to reflect on the affection with which Raffaele was surrounded. He never went to court without being attended by fifty gallant artists. Little must he have made others feel his superiority ; and for once a man of genius seems to have made envy smile. Though there is an instinct in the world, the moment a man of genius appears, yet it depends upon himself whether he is received as a blessing or an annoyance. Mankind will assault the man who attempts to command by superiority, instead of leading by courtesy ; but they will hail him let his superiority be what it may, who seems willing to help his inferiors with kindness, or supply their want of knowledge, as if they were doing him a favour to listen. The whole of this is based on goodness of heart, tender sympathies, and a consciousness without the appearance of conceit.



The glory seems to have gone from the Eternal City after Raffaello's death. In 1527, Rome was stormed and taken by foreign soldiers. The savages bivouacked in the Vatican, and injured the frescoes by their smoking and fires. Sebastian del Piombo attempted to repair them after the soldiers were gone ; and Titian, when in Rome, not knowing Sebastian, actually asked him who had been spoiling those beautiful heads ? The art went on sinking rapidly till 1595. Raffaello had been dead seventy-five years ; Giorgione, eighty-four ; Corregio, sixty ; Michel Angelo, thirty ; and Titian, nineteen. When the usual apprehensions of getting on a lee-shore seized the patrons and the artists, and the usual signal of distress was hoisted, Muziano, a pupil of Titian, founded St. Luke's Academy in order to raise a new batch of Raffaelloes and Corregios, and save the noble vessel. The only man who since dazzled for a moment, was Michel Angelo Caravaggio. He had great and original talent, though founded on common nature, without any abstract notion of form, any conception of beauty of women, or any refinement in anything. With a sledge-hammer for a pencil, he seemed resolved to batter down all opposition ; and by fierce extremes of light and shade, bearded men, dead Christs, and Transteverine beggars for apostles, he founded a school, got a character, and raised a name, which cannot be forgotten in the art of Europe.

Lanzi seems to class in the Roman school every body who practised there for the last three hundred years, but that is not fair. On this principle, all the Flemings, Dutch, Germans, Russians, Spaniards, and English, may be of the school, because they studied there ; and Rubens, Vandyke, Velasquez, the Caracci and their pupils, as well as our Reynolds, were, on the same principle, of the Roman school.

About the seventeenth century, this eminent school, in spite of the academy of St. Luke, went on declining. Birth, destruction, and reproduction seems to be the principle of every thing physical, but not of moral or mental powers. Lanzi attributes this decay to any cause but the right one ; namely, the *absence of genius*, the great primary cause, and which no academy can ever supply.

Cortona, Bernini, and Sacchi, were the heroes of this day ; and at a later period appeared Carlo Maratta. Raffaele became to him a substitute for nature ; though in 1689, he gave sufficient tone to art, to induce Clement XI. to employ him. But here, as well as elsewhere, genius was wanting. Carlo was as heavy as the lumbering folds of his own drapery ; and so insipid are his large pictures, that it is a question whether they did not generate in Europe a contempt for large scripture subjects, which has lasted ever since. However, imbecility had not done spawning ; and in a faint struggle for offspring against nature, out came Pompio Battone, and Raphael Mengs. To complete the farce, academies began to be founded in France and in the rest of Europe ; and Pompio Battone, and Raphael Mengs may be looked upon as a very fair sample of what academies can produce, have produced, and will probably produce to the end of time. Mengs was every thing but a man of genius. He was a bad painter and a deep critic ; and his predicting that we had not the works which the ancients esteemed the most, was verified, in a most astonishing manner, by the discovery of the Elgin marbles. The prediction does honour to the sagacity of Mengs. Thus end two great schools of form, conception, expression and composition ; the Florentine and the Roman. But of these the Roman was unquestionably the greater.

We now come to the Venetian, a great school of colour,

light and shadow, impasto, and execution, completing the imitation of reality; and in summing up the character of Italian and Greek art, we shall see that these components of imitation, each of which characterised an Italian school, were combined in all schools, as a necessary requisite in the perfection of Grecian imitation.

The most ancient work of Venetian art known, is in Verona, in the cellar of a monastery, (Santi Nazario e Celso). It is inaccessible to the public, but can be seen in the woodcuts of Dionisi. In the part which formed the oratorio of the faithful, has been painted the mystery of redemption; it is a work of 1070, when the Doge Silvo invited Grecian mosaic painters to adorn St. Mark; men who though rude in art, could nevertheless paint. Thus commenced the art in Venice, whither, after Constantinople was taken by the Venetians in 1204, Greek painters and sculptors, as well as orifici, flocked in crowds.

In the thirteenth century, painters had increased so much, that a company was formed, like the English constituent body to which Hogarth belonged, and laws and constitutions were made. Things were proceeding in this train when Giotto, returning from Avignon, painted at Verona and Padua. Nothing of his, however, is left in Verona; but at Padua the remains of his works are still quite fresh in fresco, and full of grace and vigour. Such was the early beginning of this great school, in which it will be seen that Greeks, as usual, had the first hand. Various names sprung up in this period, but the Bellinis are the most important. One of them was engaged by Mahommed II. and by his talents upheld the honour of the Venetian name; another was the master of Titian and Giorgione, two of the greatest names of the Venetian school.

Giorgione was a great genius ; and his execution was entirely above vulgar prejudices. He saw and seized the leading points of leading objects, and hit them with a touch and an impasto, of which he had no previous example even in Leonardo. His breadth and tone were beautiful ; and he first opened the eyes of Titian to the superior value of breadth and touch, as compared with over-wrought labour and smooth finish. Giorgione died in the vigour of his life, to the great loss of the art ; for there is no knowing how much farther he would have carried his principles, or how successfully he would have disputed the crown with Titian. Lord Carlisle has a small picture by this eminent man, of a youth buckling on the armour of a knight, which is exquisite in tone, brilliancy, depth, and feeling ; and had he not been cut off by the plague, there is no knowing how far he might have gone. He certainly first opened Titian's eyes to the value of breadth, and that comprehension of mind required to seize the leading characteristics of objects by a touch, leaving the atmosphere to finish at a given distance. After his death, Titian was without a rival. This great painter began, of course, like all Venetians, to paint directly from nature, without having previously dissected or drawn ; nor was he sensible of this error of the Venetian school, till coming to Rome and seeing the works of Michel Angelo, Raffaele, and the antique, he, like a great genius, set about remedying his deficiency ; and the perfection of this union of form and colour is seen in his greatest work, Pietro Martyre, any attempt to move which from Venice, the Venetian senate decreed should be punished with death. This picture occupied him eight years ; and eight years were well spent in such a production. The terrific gasping energy of the assassin, who has cut down the monk ; the awful prostration of the monk, wounded, and im-

ploring heaven; the flight of his companion, striding away in terror, with his dark mantle against a blue sky; the towering and waving trees, the entrance, as it were, to a dreadful forest; the embrowned tone of the whole picture, with its dark azure and evening sky, the distant mountains below, and splendid glory above, contrasting with the gloomy horrors of the murder; its perfect, though not refined drawing, its sublime expression, dreadful light and shadow, and exquisite colour; all united, render this the most perfect picture in Italian art. Why does not one perfect work entitle a man to rank as highly as a series of imperfect works, like the Capella Sistina? The answer is, because there is greater range of capacity shewn in a series of conceptions to illustrate a theory, than in the completion of one work alone, although all the component parts may be perfect; and Raffaele, and Michel Angelo, will ever rank higher than Titian, as Polygnotus will rank higher than Protogenes or Apelles. Prolific thinking, is surely of more value than intensity of imitation, though intensity of imitation must be added to realize the idea of a perfect painter.

Titian began in the style of his master Bellini, with the most minute finish; a capital basis for future practice, if a man have comprehension to know when to leave it, as Titian did. To shew the young artist that it is never too late to improve, let him compare the Bacchus and Ariadne in our National Gallery, when he could not draw finely, with the Pietro Martyre when he could. In modern art, he was the only painter who hit the characteristic of flesh. Every great painter's flesh is paint; Titian's had real circulation of blood under the skin. On comparing the Ganymede, in our National Gallery, fine as it came from Titian's pencil, with the Theodosius by Vandyke, which is close to it, as fine a spe-



cimen of Vandyke's fire of brush as can be seen, the heavy leathern look of Vandyke's colour excited astonishment. In the flesh of Ganymede, colour, oil, brush, and canvass, were all entirely forgotten ; it quivered, it moved with the action of the limbs. In Vandyke, the materials of art are uppermost ; you think of them, you wonder at the touch, you forget the subject, the expressions as it were scenting of the painter's room and the easel. And so you do with all the Flemings, but never with Titian. Though we have fine Titians in England, the Diana being at Lord Egerton's, and a head at the Duke of Sutherland's ; yet it must be confessed, that the Louvre possesses Titians more perfect, especially the entombing of Christ. In Josephine's collection at Malmaison, there were a Venus and Cupid, as perfect as our Ganymede, and not injured by *restoring*, the fatal propensity of the French. In Titian whenever you see the blues sober and in harmony, the picture is uninjured ; whenever you see them harsh and too brilliant, they have been rubbed, and the last tone has been taken off.

In colour, he was never equalled ; in execution of the brush, he was quite perfect ; and in character and expression of portrait he was like Reynolds elevated and sublime ; but the dullness which portrait, if perpetually practised, engenders in the capacity to idealise and elevate, rendered his conception of poetical characters defective. Nothing can exceed his Aretino, his senators, and his popes ; nothing can exceed Sir Joshua's Lord Heathfield and Mrs. Siddons ; but nothing can be meaner than some of Titian's attempts, like Raffaele, at high poetical expression, except some of Reynolds's heads in the Beaufort. The nerve and beauty of the colour in Diana and Acteon are so touching, that one can almost fancy one hears the water ripple and the leaves wave.



Glazing was the great feature in his tone, as it was in that of Apelles ; and there is no perfect colour without it.

The first requisite in fine colour is the ground or preparation spread over the canvass to receive the colours. It is either of a nature to absorb the oil, or to resist the absorption. If it resist the absorption of the oil out of the colour put on it, it is an oil-ground ; if it absorb the oil, it is a water-ground. And it has long been an interesting question, whether the Venetians used an oil-ground or an absorbent ground ; whether, like the Greeks, they worked in tempera, and varnished out, or whether they judiciously mingled both oil and tempera together. One would think that Vasari, living as he did with all the great painters, could not be ignorant of their various methods of practice. In 1567 or 1568, he called on Titian, saw him, staid with him, was in his painting-room, and must have talked on art, and perhaps dined or supped with him.<sup>1</sup> But Vasari distinctly says, in a sort of recipe-introduction to his lives, (edition 1568) “ that the ground on wood was *gesso*, plaster of Paris ; that then they mixed three colours, white, yellow, and amber, and spread them equally over the white ground ; and that after tracing their cartoons, they painted their pictures.” A more abominable ground never was mixed ; to those who have an organ of colour it is an absolute emetic ; and though it might have been Vasari’s and the Florentines’ ground, it never could have been endured by the eye of a Venetian. “ This was the method,” says Vasari, “ for pictures on wood ; but when canvass became the fashion, *gesso* being

<sup>1</sup> All the great painters seemed to prefer *supper*. In Tichozzi, Titian seems to have been a sociable man, and there are extracts from Titian’s and Aretino’s letters, alluding to pheasants, and presents of birds for the *next supper*.

likely to crack in ceiling, they made a ground of flour (*farina*), white lead, and nut-oil, after the canvass had been smoothed by size."<sup>1</sup>

Now when this was published, Titian, Tintoretto, and Paolo Veronese were alive and all at work; and it is but common sense to conclude, that had it been false, they would have contradicted it. Vasari concludes with saying, "So are painted all the great works in St. Mark's Place, Venice." In that place was the *Miracle of the Slave*, by Tintoretto, afterwards seen by every body in the Louvre. Lanzi says, that the Venetians preferred canvass, but that at first they painted in tempera, and then came oil-painting, which the Venetians first adopted. On the arrival of the *Bacchus and Ariadne* in England, a little bit chipped off at the corner showed the ground underneath to be of the purest white. Now, if a white ground is absorbent, it sucks the oil out of the oil colours, and becomes the colour of oil. Sir Humphry Davy said to the author of this article in 1823, that in process of time oils become varnishes; and it is not impossible that the white ground of Titian may have been absorbent, and though it had sucked out the oil in the course of three hundred years, it may have recovered its original whiteness. The author's experience extends only to thirty years, and in that period an absorbent ground which sucked out oil has never recovered its whiteness.

But, if the Venetians painted first in tempera upon the white ground, and finished in oil, the tempera intervening between the last painting and the ground would preserve the ground white; and as Titian's method of proceeding was gradual and progressive in successive layers, like that

<sup>1</sup> This is Vasari's account, pp. 51, 52, 53, Firenze, volume i. 1568.

of Protogenes, so that each layer became a help to the succeeding one, there is no reason to doubt that tempera might have been the first impasto. In parts of the *Pietro Martyre*, there certainly was the crude look of tempera preparation, softened by a glaze, especially about the projecting leg of the assassin. That the basis of Venetian pictures was a white ground, there can be no doubt; like the *intonacos* of Apelles, and the plaster-grounds of the painted mummy-coffins of Egypt. Tintoretto and Bassano used dark grounds to save trouble; but they are ruinous. They come through the thin half-tints of the picture, and render it distinct masses of dark and light, like most of the Lombard school. Many of the works of Paul Veronese, who painted one hundred years before, were in perfect preservation in the Louvre, whilst a number of the Lombard pictures were gone. The white ground was the "*luce de dentro*" of the Italians, "the light within." Upon this beautiful white ground they placed their colours purely and crudely, and then by spreading thin transparent tones, took down the rawness, without losing the force of the tint. This was the practice of the Greeks, and is also the present practice of the British school. When Cicognara, the president of the Venetian academy, was in England, he remarked to the author on the singular fact, that the British was the only school of colour left in the world, though our climate was the worst; and such was the state of Venice some years since, that an English consul could get nobody to paint the king's arms for him, and being the son of a painter, he was actually obliged to paint them himself.

As an example for the student, Titian is perfect. His execution never attracts by itself alone, but as the vehicle of the object it imitates. In colour he is never gaudy,

never black in light and shadow, never forced or affected, and in drawing, latterly, grand. In composition he was not so perfect nor so fertile as Raffaello; but in the imitation of flesh, no other artist in the world, except Apelles perhaps, could rival him. As a painter of portrait and landscape, no one has surpassed him. He did not grace his senatorial heads with the beauty of the backgrounds of Reynolds or Vandyke; but the absence of all gaiety behind the heads, perhaps added to the sublimity of their expression. It is curious to read in Boschini's little work, that young Palma, who had it from old Palma, a pupil of Titian, told him that Titian very often finished with his thumb. Palma distinctly says, that he has seen Titian put on with his thumb and fingers masses of colour which gave life to a picture.

In a word, neither of the great Italian schools showed the sense of the ancients. The Romans omitted colour and imitation from sheer accident; the Venetians drawing and form; and Reynolds, without going into the causes of these mutual deficiencies, laid it down as a principle, that colour and reality were incompatible with high art; whereas, when each school found out its deficiency, each endeavoured to correct its peculiar defect.

The giant of Titian's school was Tintoretto, who gave such early indications of self-will and genius, that Titian, mean and jealous, turned him out of the house. Raffaello would not have done this; he did not turn out Julio Romano. But Tintoretto was not to be crushed by the bad passions of his envious master; and took it very properly as an evidence of his talent. And what did Titian get by his paltry meanness? Nothing but pity. Tintoretto, young as he was, immediately formed a plan of his own, for combining the drawing of Michel Angelo with the colour of Titian.

He devoted the day to the one, and many parts of many nights, and often whole ones, to the other. In a few years, the result was the *Miracle of the Slave* and the *Crucifixion*. Although the execution of Tintoretto looked daring and impudent by the side of the modest, senatorial dignity of Titian, yet there was a grand, defined dash about it. The original sketch of the *Miracle of the Slave*, is in the possession of Rogers the poet, and is a very fine thing. Every body speaks of the *Crucifixion* as a wonderful instance of power. But in colour it is lurid and awful ; in expression, character, and delicacy of feeling, discordant and offensive. His pictures seem to be a mass of fore-shortenings, affected twistings, dashing darks, and splashing lights, with a hundred horse-power of execution ; bearded heads, Venetian armour, silks, satins, angels, horses, architecture, dogs, water, and brawny-armed and butcher-legged gondoliers, without pathos, passion, or refinement. He used to put little models in boxes, and light them in different holes, for effect. Like all Italians, he was accustomed to model and hang up his models by threads for fore-shortening. His style of form was a mixture of the pulpiness of the Venetian, and the long, anatomical, bony look of the Florentine school. He cannot be depended upon for correctness of proportions, but he was a grand and daring genius ; and his conduct, when oppressed by Titian, should ever be held up as an example for the aspiring youth, when trodden upon by his elders.

Whilst Tintoretto was astonishing the Venetians by his daring, which made even Titian tremble, Paul Veronese, the other great contemporary, was mildly pursuing his azure and beautiful course. Of a nature the reverse of Tintoretto, and not equal to him in sublimity or terror of conception, he yet gave equal evidence of being run away with by his brush.



Ceilings, canvasses, halls, walls, and palaces, were so many proofs of his power. His greatest work is at Paris. It is the *Marriage of Cana*, a wonderful instance of executive power ; but here all story, sentiment, and pathos, are buried in the noise, bustle, eating, drinking, and fiddling of a Venetian city feast. Paul Veronese was certainly the most corrupt painter of the time.

After these great men, the art began to decay ; and Paul Veronese and Tintoretto gave symptoms of a conventional mode, which, when taken up by inferior men, hastened its ruin. Down to the present age, with the exception of two or three mannerists, no name occurs worthy of eminence or selection. Canaletti was a genius in his way. Sebastian Ricci, and Marco Ricci, were much employed in England to disfigure ceilings and palaces by wholesale, with gods and goddesses, in subjects allegorical, poetical, mythological, and nonsensical, to understand which it required pages of explanation, and to see which a nine-feet telescope by Dolland. Montague, Burlington, and Bulstrode houses, are signs of the infatuation of the English nobility at that time ; an infatuation, however, which shewed a disposition to employ art as it had been employed in Italy, and if the genius had been equal to the opportunity, the result would have been different.

The next school of any importance is the Lombard school, which comprehends the Mantuan, the Modenese, the Cremonese, and the Milanese. Andrea Montegua is the hero of the Mantuan school, and Vasari says, that his master-pieces are the tempera designs which we have at Hampton Court. They are fine things ; Rubens used them ; and they are a mine of costume, though the forms have too much the look of the model. Julio Romano's great work is at Mantua, yet he must be



considered as a Roman. It was, as Lanzi says, the greatest effort of the last style before Leonardo da Vinci introduced a new one, which overturned the Gothic. After Julio Romano, the art decayed, and then of course came the old story, "Una accademia per avvivarla." This academy has been splendidly kept up by Austria, and, as usual, has not produced a single man of great genius, in three hundred years.

Contiguous to the Modenese school is the Parman ; and now we come to the most unaccountable and delightful of all painters, Corregio. When it had been determined to ornament the great cupola of St. John, Corregio, though then a young man, was selected to paint it ; and, like Raffaelle, his genius expanded with the opportunity. After Raffaelle, Titian, Michel Angelo, Da Vinci, and Bartolomeo, who would have thought that another style, independent of either, and unlike any thing else in the world, could have burst out ? But so it was. Of all the painters that ever lived in the world, there is no accounting for Corregio. Unlike Greeks, Romans, and Italians, out he came into the world, in colour, drawing, light and shadow, composition, expression, and form, like nature, and unlike every body else, who ever studied nature at all. Michel Angelo, Raffaelle, Titian, we can trace ; we see upon whom they were grafted, when they budded and burst forth. But who is Corregio ? Nobody is certain. One swears he was poor, another that he was well off ; another says he died in consequence of a fever which he caught by carrying all his money in copper, the price of a picture ; another protests it was no such thing. Meng's account is the best, and Vasari's mostly without authority.

There is no certainty that his portrait is in existence ; in fact there is as much dispute about it as there is about Shakes-

peare's ; and here are his beautiful works, his *Notte*, his *Catherine*, his *Christ in the Garden*, his *Magdalene*, his *Venus and Mercury*, and his *Ecce Homo* in the National Gallery, the only head of Christ in the world. This head of Christ ought to be revered as the identification of the character, as much as the head of Jupiter by Phidias was in the Pagan world. There is no Christ's head by Raffaele which at all approaches it, either in the *Transfiguration* or in any other work ; and the head by Leonardo da Vinci in the gallery cannot be endured after it. Of all painters, he astonishes one the most. If any fault is to be found with him, his men have a touch too effeminate. His colour is exquisite ; his light and shadow are enchanting, but his forms defective ; his composition is simple and infantine ; his expression unimpassioned, but sweetness itself ; and when sorrow or suffering was to be represented, who ever did it more tenderly than Corregio ? Let any man who doubts this, dwell for a moment on the gentle suffering, and the feminine yet manly beauty of the Christ above mentioned. It is the very Christ who commanded by submission ; without weakness beautiful, without effeminacy tender ; without taint the personification of love. His hands, his shoulders, his beard, his hair, belong to that divine being who vanquished sin, by yielding to torture. It does not seem painted, but as if were spread upon the canvass by an angel's breath. His men look as innocent as girls ; his women as guileless as infants ; and his infants as if they had just come from the skies.

In the cupola at Parma, the great wonder is the foreshortening ; and in the mouths of the vulgar this is technical perfection ; whereas there is nothing more purely mechanical, nothing in fact you can so easily teach. One single smile of Corregio's angels, one touching look of Raffaele's

apostles, the sentiment of the Duke de Lorenzo by Michel Angelo, one crimson tone by Titian, are worth all the fore-shortening on earth. The greatest excellencies of Signorelli, Buonarrotti, and Corregio, are said to be their fore-shortenings; whereas the greatest excellencies of Buonarrotti and Corregio are not their fore-shortening at all.

In spite of the perfections of this wonderful man, he founded as it were the decay, "le commencement de la fin." His breadth in fresco produced Lanfranco, Cortona, and Giordano, who covered Italian palaces with the *sweeping* brush of our patent chimney-cleansers, beginning it in the morning, finishing it by the evening, standing on the floor, and disdaining a scaffold, previous study, or previous thinking; and others came who bedaubed the palaces of Europe with clouds like feather-beds, cornucopias and Jupiters, till one's brain aches in thinking of them.

Reynolds was immensely indebted to Corregio; for Rembrandt and Corregio are certainly the bases of his style. One of the most beautiful works in the Louvre was the Marriage of St. Catherine, which when once seen haunts us in after life in dreams. In a word, Corregio was an angel that passing this earth in its flight, drooped its wings and dropped upon it, to give us a foretaste of the smiles which welcome a happy spirit in a purer sphere.

Parmegiano is the next important name in this school, who grafted the grace of Corregio on the affectations of Michel Angelo. His greatest work is in our National Gallery; the Vision of St. Jerome. The Christ is a beautiful boy, but affected; the Virgin is Michel-Angelesque, having the *glumdalclitch* look of his Brobdignaggian women. St. John is finely drawn, but not unexceptionable; and the St. Jerome is sleeping in a position as if he had got into a

cramp in the first part of the vision, and could not get out till it was over. It is raw in colour, skinned in construction, and spoils the composition altogether. His small pictures are beautiful but long in proportion. His fingers seem always to move to music ; and his limbs to be conscious how gracefully they are disposed. He has often been a fatal example to the young. Nor is his Moses, whatever Gray may say of it, an instance of the sublime. The expression is mean, and the form overdone. Parmegiano died, like Raffaello at the age of thirty-seven, when all that was expected of him had not been realised, and when, if he had lived longer, perhaps he would have done worse.

In 1570, the best Corregieschi were grown old or dead, and the school of Parma began to give way to that of Bologna, the truly great academical school. This was not an academy in the modern sense of the word ; it was a school, and nothing but a school, without distinctions, and managed by directors ; and it is the only academy which has ever produced any genius. Dominichino, Guido, and other names of the second period, came between unrivalled excellence and approaching destruction, and stopped for a little time the decay of the art.

Of the Cremona school, there is no great name. In the Milanese school, Da Vinci seems the hero ; he founded an academy which, according to Lanzi, was the first in Europe that reduced art to rules, the works of Leonardo being the canon. His great work is in the refectory. But fifty years afterwards Aramini says that it was spoiled ; in 1642 Scannelli writes, that it was with difficulty made out ; and Barry ultimately saw it destroyed by a *restorer*. When Eugene Beauharnois was viceroy of Italy, he drained the refectory and had it paved with tiles ; and it is said in a re-

port, that the colours began to revive. Da Vinci's academy having produced no talent, Maria Theresa founded another, which, though full of casts of every description, has nevertheless proved equally unsuccessful.

The Caracci and their pupils were the last crop of genius which Italy threw up, and though they were second-rate, they came of the breed of the great who were no more. The style of Michel Angelo seems to have taken early root in Bologna, perhaps from his executing in that place the statue of Julius II. Giotto, in the first instance, excited emulation by flying about Italy; but he seems to have scattered everywhere the seeds of art, and Tibaldi, after having studied in Rome, certainly founded this style at Bologna. The first school formed was by Bagna Cavallo, and Primaticcio. It failed in 1564; upon which Primaticcio went to France, and Tibaldi to Spain, and the art was of course neglected.

The Caracci succeeded them and were extraordinary men; but what would they have done if Raffaello, Michel Angelo, Titian, and Corregio had never lived? They saw nature only by the help of their great predecessors. Whatever the Caracci did had the appearance of labour; whilst whatever was done by their great predecessors, had an air as if there was something that no labour could attain. Ludovico had more feeling than his brothers, and had the honour of being instructed by Tintoretto. They were the sons of a tailor, and founded an academy in their own house. Agostino principally engraved, and Annibale principally painted; but they each contributed instruction to the school in which were formed Dominichino, Guido, Lanfranco, Guercino, and Albano.

The greatest genius of the school was Guido; but he was



envied by the Caracci ; and even in this school the vices of an academy began to appear. We did not find Raffaele sowing discord amongst his pupils by putting one against the other.\* Albano was opposed to Guido. Dominichino was an eminent but heavy genius ; and his communion of St. Jerome is a fine thing though dull. There was a vulgar grandeur about Guercino, and an insipidity about Albano. The great work of Annibale Caracci is the Farnese gallery, which is excellent in every thing, but nerve and genius. Say what you will about the Caracci, there is a want in their art, which affects the pen of him who is attempting to do them justice. They lived together, did not marry, and were ill paid and ill-tempered ; like all old bachelors they were discontented, they did not know why, and fidgety, they did not know for what ; they envied the talents they were desirous of bringing forward, called the art their " wife," and were never satisfied, living in a perpetual fret of teaching, and painting, and complaining. Annibale became dissipated and died early. It is an extraordinary feature in the moral character of the Italian artists, that the greater part did not marry, and hence came the cant " of the art being their wife," with the natural consequence, that girls who had been models generally ended by being mistresses.

The Caracci kept up this affectation, they said the art was their " cara sposa ;" and to all the confusion of a bachelor's house, added the slang of a mere painter's habits. At the dinner-table, crayon and paper were always at hand to catch attitudes, actions, and expressions, and groups ; as if expressions and attitudes could not have been remembered in the solitude of the study, and kept till wanted, with just as much effect as this vulgar intrusion on the usages of society. A great artist is always a man of the world ; an



inferior one a man of the palette. Raffaele, Titian, Angelo, Rubens, and Reynolds, would have passed a twelvemonth in any society without being discovered to be artists; but the Caracci would have talked of tone and touching during the first half-hour. A genteel woman, accidentally travelling in a coach with three artists who were *palette-men*, expressed afterwards her wonder and suspicion as to the state of their intellects. For after the usual dead silence, one of them said, with an air of vast profundity: "How finely the white sheet in the hedge carries off the colour in the sky." "And look at that old woman's cloak taking up the brick-wall," said another. "Yes," said the oldest of the set, "how finely it was done yesterday by a red night-cap in a pretty bit of Sir George." Johnson used to say, "Sir, we were reduced to talk of the weather." But even the weather is preferable to this detestable affectation. Though the deepest principle of the ancients was the preservation of beauty in everything, they never sacrificed beauty to expression, but always combined the two; whereas Guido, by an eternal repetition of the expression of the Niobe in Christs and Virgins rendered the preservation of beauty at such an expense insipid. The beauty of the Helen and Paris was truly exquisite; but hundreds of Herodias's daughters with St. John's heads, "have a look," as Lord Byron says, "of bread and butter." His grace was the grace of theatres; his pencil light, airy, and beautiful, though rather careless than masterly. Dominichino, on the other hand, obedient, slow, and timid, imitated everybody and fell short of all. But Guercino was the most original of the school; his finest manner is his candlelight manner, yet still there is a vulgarity in his forms.

None of the Caracci or their school, had they been born

at an earlier period, would have advanced the art one iota beyond their predecessors, so entirely dependent were they upon the great who had gone before. "Such was the state of art," says Fuseli, "when the spirit of machinery destroyed what was yet left of meaning;" when contrast and grouping meant composition and thinking, and a mass of rapid, thoughtless, empty, impudent frescos disgraced the walls, palaces, and churches of Italy. Pietro of Cortona and Luca Giordano are the heroes of this inundation of splashiness; and yet what artists they were! The decay which it announced, was the decay of the giant Italian fresco hand that still struggled to do its duty, whilst the head was fast approaching imbecility in thought. The meanest pupil of the meanest machinist would have swept the first-rate British artist that has ever yet existed into the earth, with his tiptoes and exhibition-glare.

Thus, with the Caracci and their school, ended the greatness of Italian art; nor has there been one single painter of such genius since, from Andrea Sacchi to Cammucini the present hero of the Romans. Rubens, Vandyke, and Rembrandt turned it into a new channel in Flanders; Velasquez and Murillo kept it alive in Spain; Teniers, Ostadt, and Jan Steen preserved it from extinction in Holland; the Poussins, Claude, and Salvator, meanwhile revived it in Italy; whilst the old Gothic masters in Germany, with their colour, and most of them with great invention but in bad taste, were an absolute dung-hill of diamonds and pearls, which everybody has considered himself as having a right to plunder, not even excepting Raffaele himself. Whilst the art was sunk to the lowest depths in Europe, Reynold's in England broke forth with a brilliancy of colour which has rendered it no longer a hopeless attempt to rival the

gorgeousness of Venetian splendour. If ever there was a refutation of Reynold's own theory, that "genius was the child of circumstances," he was a living one ; in spite of all circumstances, in spite of the utter want of all education as a painter, in spite of all the apathy of the nation, and the extinction of art in Europe, out he came with a vigour and beauty which have ever since defied rivalship in portrait and children.

The Germans are an extraordinary nation, but always more or less under the influence of a wrong taste. Their early painters are full of thought ; and as a proof of what Raffaele's estimation of them must have been, he adopted almost to the letter, in his famous Spasimo in Spain, Shoengaer's magnificent composition of Christ bearing the cross. The hand leaning on the stone, with the momentary action of the drapery, is in Shoengaer. The brute pulling Christ, in an old German dress, Raffaele has taken and improved ; and he has also placed the Marys in the fore-ground which Shoengaer placed in the back-ground ; but the whole of the composition is Shoengaer's, though Raffaele of course has added to it his own perfections.

Albert Dürer is considered as the greatest man of the German school ; but there is nothing which he has ever done that can compete, in expression and composition, with this fine production of Shoengaer's. Fuzeli says, "Albert Dürer was a man of great ingenuity, but not of genius. His proportions of the human figure are on a comprehensive principle founded on nature, and the result of deep thinking." He had sometimes a glimpse of the sublime, but it was only a glimpse. The expanded agony of Christ on the Mount of Olives, and the mystic conception of his figure of Melancholy, are thoughts of sublimity, though the ex-

pression of the latter is weakened by the rubbish he has thrown about her. His Knight, attended by Death and the Fiend, is more capricious than terrible ; and his Adam and Eve are two common models shut up in a rocky dungeon. " If he approached genius in any part of his art, it was in colour ; his colour went beyond his age, and as far excelled in truth, and breadth, and handling, the oil colour of Raffaele, as Raffaele excelled him in every other quality. I speak of his easel-pictures ; his drapery is broad though much too angular, and rather snapt than folded. Albert is called the father of the German school, though he neither reared scholars nor was imitated by the German artists of his or the succeeding century. That the exportation of his works to Italy should have effected a temporary change in the principles of some Tuscans who had studied Michel Angelo, as Andrea del Sarto, and Jacopo da Pontorino, is a fact which proves that minds as well as bodies may be at certain times subject to epidemic influences."

Lucas von Leyden was the Dutch caricature of Albert Dürer ; and ere long the style of Michel Angelo was adopted in the same way as by Pelegrino Tibaldi, and being spread by the graver of Giorgio Mantuano, provoked those caravans of German, Dutch, and Flemish students, who, on their return from Italy, introduced at the courts of Prague and Munich, in Flanders and the Netherlands, that preposterous manner, that bloated excrescence of swampy brains, which in the form of man left nothing human, distorted action and gesture with insane affectation, and dressed the gewgaws of children in colossal shapes, in the style of Golzius and Spranger. But though content to feed upon the husks of Tuscan design, they imbibed the colour of Venice, and spread the elements of that excel-

lence which distinguished the succeeding schools of Flanders and of Holland. At this moment out blazed upon the world that giant of execution and brute violence of brush, and brilliant colour, and daring composition, Rubens; and another mysterious and extraordinary being, Rembrandt, who seemed born to confound all theory but that of innate genius, confirmed it for ever. Rubens gloried in the splendour of the rainbow, whilst Rembrandt enjoyed only the poetry and solemnity of twilight; when the evening star glittered, and the sun was down, then was the hour of his inspiration.

The scholar of Otho Venius, Rubens, imbibed from his master an emblematical taste; he spent eight years in Italy, hurried back at the death of his mother, and painted that wonder of art the Elevation of the Cross, before he was thirty. It is the perfection of a fearless hand and daring brush, conscious of its principle; and though the sweep of Michel Angelo's contours, applied to butcher's backs and coal-heaver's legs, rather increased their vulgarity than added to their refinement, yet the dashing power of that astonishing picture, in spite of its Flemish, pallid, and ugly wretches for women, renders it the bloom of his powers. Rubens was a man of such general knowledge, that the Marquis of Spinosa said, that painting was his least qualification. He was ambassador to Spain and England, and adorned the banquetting ceiling at Whitehall, the centre portion forming an amazing picture. Educated classically, he carried classical feeling into every thing but his art; and after spouting Virgil with enthusiasm, he turned to his canvass and painted a Flemish butcher with bandy legs (if he happened to have such) for Æneas. How extraordinary it is that, relishing as he did, Homer, Virgil, and Livy, he should give Dutch Helens, Flemish Junos, and



German Diomedes, for classic art. His greatest work is the Luxembourg Gallery; and for once he hit a sweet female expression in the mother of Mary de' Medicis, after accouchement. One of his finest pieces, the Rape of Proserpine, is at Blenheim, where the Arethusa, as a water nymph, is putting up her hand, with her back towards you. That a man who could occasionally paint with such delicacy, should so often disgust us with his flabby vulgarity, is not to be accounted for. He painted portrait finely, landscape sweetly, and animals with great power, except the lion, whose straight shaggy mane he always curled like the ancients, and lost its noble look. He was a great man, and painted wherever he went. He was diligent and religious; he rose at four, heard mass, and went to his painting-room, where, with little intermission, he painted till five; he then rode, and returned to his friends, many of them the most celebrated men of the day, who were assembled to meet him at supper; at eleven he retired, and again proceeded to work at day-break. It is interesting to contrast this virtuous course of so great a man, with the vulgar infidelity which alone distinguishes the most incompetent in the art; and it is impossible not to conclude, that those whom God has most endowed with gifts, are the most sensible of their own imperfections. Rubens was thrice married, and educated his children highly; one of them wrote a very learned work, *De lato Clavo*, which shews research and learning.

No where did Rubens shine so effectually as in the Louvre. In all the world, perhaps, there never was such a splendid opportunity for studying to perfection the principles of the great men in the art, as was afforded in the Louvre in its full glory; and injurious as the formation of that collection had proved to the cities of Italy, yet Napoleon gave a



dignity and an importance to the art, which it has not since lost, by making the productions of its great men subjects of treaty, and receiving them as equivalent to territory or treasure. There you rushed from the Romans to the Venetians, from the Flemings to the Spaniards, from Titian to Raffaele, from Rembrandt to Rubens, and settled principles in half an hour, which it took others months, perhaps years, to accomplish. It cannot be denied, that in force of effect, Rubens bore down all opposition, from his breadth, brightness, and depth ; and let every painter be assured, that if he keep these three qualities of effect, the leading qualities in the imitation of nature, he will defy rivalship in the contest of exhibition.

Rembrandt, with all his magic, painting on too confined a principle, lost in power, and looked spotty and individual. Paul Veronese and Tintoretto had not that solidity, which is the characteristic of Rubens ; Titian seemed above contest, and relying on his native majesty of colour, exhibited a senatorial repose, which gave to Rubens a look almost of impertinence ; but still you could not keep your eyes off the seducer, and even if you turned your back, you kept peeping over your shoulder. Here all peculiarity suffered. The silvery beauty of Guido looked grey ; the correctness of Raffaele looked hard ; Rembrandt failed most by the brightness of Rubens, the magic of Corregio, or the sunny splendour of Titian ; and after wandering about for days, you decided that *he* suffered most who had most peculiarity. With all his grossness, want of beauty, and artificial style, Rubens' brightness and breadth carried the day, as far as arresting the eye, and forcing you to look at him, hate as you might his vulgarity, and his Flemish women, and his Flanders breed of horses.

Rembrandt van Rhyn, was next to Rubens, in point of art, and more than equal to him in originality. Whether in portrait, landscape, or historical pictures large and small, he was like nobody; as wonderful as any, and sometimes superior to all. His bistre-drawings are exquisite, his etchings unrivalled; his colour, light and shadow, and surface, solemn, deep, and without example; but in the naked form, male or female, he was an Esquimaux. His notions of the delicate form of women, would have frightened an Arctic bear. Let the reader fancy a Billingsgate fish-woman, descending to a bath at a moment's notice, with hideous feet, large knees and bony legs, a black eye, and a dirty night-cap,—and he will have a perfect idea of Rembrandt's conception of female beauty. Though his historical pictures are often remarkable for pathos and expression, his characters are sometimes absolutely ridiculous. His Abrahams are Dutch old clothesmen; and yet his *Jacob's Dream* is sublime beyond expression. Whatever he painted, he enriched; his surface was a mass of genius, and his colour a rainbow, darkened by the gloom of twilight. In portrait, sometimes, his dignity was equal to Titian; but the characters he painted were inferior.

These two wonderful men, each a perfect contrast to the other, revived art; Rubens on the principles of the Venetians, and Rembrandt in defiance of all principles. But the latter sacrificed too much to a peculiarity, and he was punished for it in the Louvre by the side of others.

Rubens produced Vandyke, Snyders, and Jordaens, and a whole host of pupils. Vandyke had more elegance, but not so much imagination; Jordaens more vulgarity, with equal power. Snyders was a mere animal painter, and he carried the touch necessary to execute the hairy skin of an animal, into every thing he did. Vandyke by his splendid portraits,

certainly generated a love of art in England, which has never left us, after the destruction of historical painting at the Reformation.

Rembrandt had pupils, who were by no means equal to himself. David Teniers the elder was a pupil of Rubens. These two extraordinary men were certainly the founders of the Dutch school ; and the great principles of their works were carried by David Teniers the younger, Jan Steen, Ostadt, and Cuypp, into smaller and more delicate productions. A man of the highest ambition and noblest views in art can study with the greatest benefit the dead fish and bunches of turnips, servant girls and drunken boors, for beauty of handling and effects in art. He who looks down on the excellencies of the Dutch school, does so from a narrowness of understanding, and not an enlargement of views ; and if an historical painter can see nothing to learn in their little beautiful works, he will not learn much from the greater productions of Titian.

Directly after the Flemish comes the Spanish school, which, not so vulgar as the former, was equally unideal. The Spaniards painted the people about them for all sorts of subjects and all sorts of characters ; and they are only more refined than the Flemings because the Spaniards are a more cultivated people. The long possession of the Moors prevented the Spaniards from advancing as soon as Italy. The great schools in Spain have been those of Madrid, Seville, and Valencia. In 1446 Antonio Rincon abandoned the Gothic of the European artists ; in 1475 Gallegos was so like Albert Dürer, that he is suspected to have been a pupil ; in the sixteenth century riches flowed in, patronage was liberal, and, what is most important of all, genius existed in Spain. Berra de Baeza, pupil of Michel Angelo, painted in fresco,

at Madrid, Salamanca, and Valladolid; and in the Trinità del Monte in Rome, there is also a picture of his. Various painters follow of course in all the schools, till the coming of the real hero of Spanish art.

Velasquez was born at Seville in 1599. He became a pupil of Herrera, and left Seville in 1622, to seek his fortune in the metropolis; where he succeeded so completely as a portrait painter, that he got to court, and having become acquainted with Rubens, often visited his painting-room. Rubens must have been of the greatest use to him. Velasquez then visited Italy, but could not bear the Roman school after the Venetian. In masterly execution and life he surpassed Rubens and Vandyke. Of all the great painters, he seems to have despised the most the vulgar appetite for what is called *finish*, that is, polished smoothness. Every touch from Velasquez is a *thought* calculated to express the leading points of the *thing* intended to convey it. Masterly beyond description, and delightful beyond belief, he conveyed the impressions of life as exquisitely as if his imitation breathed. But so utterly decayed is the present Spanish school, with its pompous academy, that Spaniards when asked how they can reconcile their hideous polish with the freedom of Velasquez, have answered that *Velasquez was always in a hurry*.

After Velasquez ranks Murillo, a man of a tenderer genius, but equally alive to life. He has the surface of Corregio and colour peculiarly his own; and he was what the Italians call a *Naturaliste*; indeed, the whole school was of that species. Like Rembrandt and Rubens, the heroes of history are always the countrymen of the Spanish painter. The Prodigal Son is one of the finest works in the Duke of Sutherland's collection; it is beautiful in execution, light and shadow, and colour, but Spanish in character and expression.

They never got beyond their model or their country ; and this may in a great measure be owing to their masters having been Venetians, though Tibaldi and Torrigiano had visited Spain. Murillo was an exquisite painter, and if he had been soundly educated like the Greeks, would have been as refined in character and form as he is now in colour and handling. He first got an insight into painting from Moya, a pupil of Vandyke. Having sold his pictures to hawkers for what they would bring, he saved money and went to Madrid, and, with the frankness of genius, at once introduced himself to Velasquez, who received him like another Raffaele. After three years of continued kindness, he returned to Seville, founded an Academy, and for his great work of St. Antony at Padua, he received ten thousand reals. It is said that he covered more canvass than any body else ; but after the acres of Rubens in the Louvre, that assertion is questionable. Velasquez and Murillo, of course, came like the rest, *before* academies. One now exists in Madrid, and no genius has appeared since its institution. It is quite ridiculous to see the same results all over the world ; and it is still more ridiculous, to find the kings of Europe still continuing to found and embellish these useless establishments.

In France, throughout all the middle ages, the art of design was never extinct, either in mosaic, glass, tapestry, fresco, miniature, or tempera. Though the learned author of the "Discourse Historique" says, that the French were the first who presumed to personify the Almighty in the form of man ; yet nothing worth remembering occurred till the death of Leonardo, in the arms of Francis I. in 1518, and the employment of Primaticcio, Rosso, and Nicolo del Abbate. Jean Cousin in 1462, and Vouet in 1582, were the first French painters of any importance in this latter period. Si-



mon Vouet, the younger, was the master of Le Sueur, Le Brun, Mignard, and Dufresnoy ; he lived in 1600, and the best period of French art was from that time until 1665, the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV. They, as usual, founded an academy, ten years before Poussin's death ; and Coytel, Jouvenet, and Rigaud, were the produce of the institution ; whilst Poussin, Le Sueur, and Le Brun, had flourished and obtained their reputation before it was founded. Van Loo and Boucher succeeded Jouvenet and Rigaud, and gave additional evidence of the utter incompetence of the academic system. About 1770, flourished Greuze, who began to evince a better taste, and was persecuted by the Royal Academy for his independence, till the Revolution of 1790 put an end for the time to all imposture. Down went the Royal Academy in an instant ; and all the conventional distinctions in art, which are generally the cloak of imbecility, were fluttered off in the whirlwind. The people, long prevented from seeing fine works in the great galleries, now broke into these galleries with brutal exultation. Bloody and dreadful as were the consequences of the first burst of the French Revolution, one of its most beneficial effects consisted in throwing open all matters of art and science to the people. Naigeon, the conservator of the Luxembourg, said, in 1814, that nothing was opened to the people before the Revolution ; and we ourselves in England are now enjoying our Museums, entirely in consequence of the effect produced upon Mr. Fox and the English, who visited Paris in the year 1802, and who were astonished at the noble frankness with which the Louvre was exposed.

The academy being swallowed up in the whirlpool of political revolution, the Institute supplied its place. Napoleon, on becoming first consul, sent immediately for David, who

had been a furious republican during "le temps de la terreur;" a man of great talent, but of abominable taste. Napoleon made him his court-painter, and gave such preponderance to his influence, that the detestable style of David became everywhere but in England the style of European art. Gros, Prudhom, Guérin, deviated from the rigidity of David's style. Prudhom was a man of genius. Hideous as was the style of David, in fact painted Roman sculpture, it had some foundation in reason. This was, if possible, to bring the French back to classical art, after the flutter of Boucher, and the pomposity of Coypel; but, like all reformers, he went to excess.

The materials for assisting them are so deficient, that the greatest artists have arrived at any thing like an imitation of nature only by the greatest science and skill. It is much easier to paint a button and a chair, than a human face; therefore the great artists dwelt upon the face with all their dexterity, and touched off the button and chair with less anxiety and care. The French used to say, that *theirs* was the system of the ancient Greeks, and that it was *our* prejudice to disapprove of it. But before we have done, we shall show that it was not the system of the ancient Greeks; and as we pay all due deference to the Italians, Flemings, Dutch, Spaniards, and Greeks, and to their own Poussin and Claude, they have no right to accuse us of prejudice because we disapprove of David. We do not deny David's talent, because it must have required talent to mislead the continent of Europe. In art, David's expression was taken from the theatre, and his actions were borrowed from the opera-house; his forms were Roman and not Grecian, and his colour was hideous enough to produce ophthalmia. If he and his pictures, with all he ever designed, and all he ever

invented, had not appeared in the world, or having appeared, had been utterly rooted out of it, the atmosphere would be purer. He is a plague-spot, a whitened leprosy in painting, that haunts the imagination with disgust. This he had the impudence to say of Rubens. But since the peace, and from the connection with England, a better school of colour has sprung up in France; and La Roche gives evidence of having in some degree got rid of the furniture look of David, though it still poisons a French pencil.

Horace Vernet is a distinguished name; indeed, he may be called the first light-infantry grenadier of European art. He paints a head in five minutes, a whole imperial family in ten minutes, and an historical picture in twenty; and he paints all three with talent and skill. Though the French are not yet *sound* in art, they are the best educated artists in Europe; and if the English would combine their own colour with the careful habits of French early study, and if each school could supply the deficiencies of the other, they would make out a very good school between them.

In thus suffering ourselves to be led away to the present state of the French school, we have omitted to do justice to the great men of former times; Poussin, Sebastian, Bourdon, and Le Sueur. Poussin is the hero of French art. His Death of Germanicus is very fine, as a specimen of history; and his Polyphemus sitting on the top of a mountain, and playing his pipe, with his back towards you, is a pure specimen of the poetic. He studied the ancient Romans so much, that he became Roman in his faces, drapery, and figures; and in his naked forms, the common model is too apparent. His finest works are in England; but though distinguished for expression, there is always an antique heartlessness, as if copied from the masks of an ancient theatre.

Bourdon's *Return of the Ark* is a high proof of his conception ; and *Le Sueur's St. Bruno* is pure in taste, but bad in colour. The *Battles of Alexander* by *Le Brun* show the latter to have been of the family of machinists. His colour is bronzed and disagreeable. *Le Brun* was a court-favourite, and his Greeks, as well as barbarians, have an air of the opera at Versailles. His composition is artificial ; and he is not a fit example for youth. The only man who coloured with exquisite feeling was *Watteau*, whose touch and delicacy of tint may be studied with great profit by any artist.

In a word, it is extraordinary that the French as a nation, have never been right in art. *Poussin* was the only man who could have set them right, and they persecuted him so, that he settled in Rome. *Claude Lorraine* can hardly belong to them ; and though *Louis Philippe* is now employing them by hundreds, nothing very eminent has yet proceeded from such encouragement.

The Germans are taking higher ground than any other nation, and are making rapid advances, particularly at Munich. They have begun again fresco painting ; and the liberality of their king has rendered Munich the most flourishing city in Europe for arts and artists ; but as *Canova* said when he was in England, there is very little grand art left in the world. It is extraordinary to reflect on the little original thinking that is to be found. This was more apparent in the Louvre than any where else ; and one could not help being amused at seeing the way in which *Rubens*, who, like *Michel Angelo*, is supposed to have never looked out of himself, had plundered the old Gothic painters ; the *Fall of the Damned*, by an old German, being the complete basis of the same subject by *Rubens*.

When incessant demands are made on the genius of a

favourite, every aid to thinking is grasped at and improved. Raffaele did this ; so did Rubens ; and even Reynolds used to have portfolios brought him to look over at breakfast, and select what would help him, saying, "It will save me the trouble of thinking." This involves a very serious question in art. The utmost merit that can be allowed is that of *skilful adaptation*. "Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit" may be said of all these ; and surely a good thought badly done is justifiable food for a superior mind to render it better.

We come now to the British School, which, though the last founded in Europe, is inferior to none in variety of power.

There is no doubt that the art<sup>1</sup> would have advanced in

<sup>1</sup> It is a curious fact, that the art seems to have been in an advanced state in England, while it is doubtful whether there was a painter in Florence, in 1236. In 1250 the authorities in Florence sent for some Greeks because there was no painter ; yet at that period in England, and long before, historical painting seemed quite the fashion amongst the upper classes. All the king's rooms, as well as his chapel, were painted. In the 25th of Edward III. in the rolls of the Exchequer, 26th September 1351, there is a charge to "William of Padryngton, for making twenty angels to stand in the tabernacles by task-work, at 6s. 8d. for each image, L.6, 13s. 4d." In 1530, were begun the beautiful pictures and designs in St. Stephen's Chapel ; and it is curious to see, in all the accounts, the continual allusions to oil-painting. The artists employed must certainly have been men of distinguished talent, who had the power of ordering inferior artists to assist them. The most celebrated of their number appears to have been Hugh de St. Alban's, who was appointed by the king as his principal painter. The following document, dated 18th March 1350, contains his appointment. "The king to all and singular, the sheriffs, mayors, bailiffs, officers, and his other lieges, as well within liberties as without, to whom be greeting, Know ye, that we have appointed our beloved Hugh de St. Alban's, master of the painters assigned for the works to be executed in our chapel, at our palace at Westminster, to take and choose as many painters and other workmen as may be required for performing those works, in any places where it may seem expedient, either within li-



Britain side by side with the continental nations, if we had continued Catholics ; in fact, we were doing so, when Wickliffe's opposition to the Catholic priests roused up the people to hate and detest every thing connected with their system. Painting of course came under this furious denunciation, and through successive ages went on till the period of the Reformation.

In Edward the Confessor's time, there were executed bas-reliefs as good as any thing done at that time in Europe, and by no means deficient in grace, though disproportioned, and unskilful in composition. In one of these there is a king in bed, and leaning upon his hand; which in an improved style might be made a fine thing. In Alfred's reign and before, York and Canterbury were adorned with pictures and tapestry ; and in the tenth century, Ethelrida adorned Ely Cathedral with a series of historical pictures in memory of her famous husband Birthwood. As this is recorded, says Strutt, the practice must have existed before ; and that it continued to exist and be the fashion down to the Edwards and Henrys, there is good evidence ; for in the time of Henry III. mention is made of the immortal Master Walker's painting in Westminster, the no less renowned John Thornton of Coventry, painter there, and the east window of York.<sup>2</sup> In

berties or without, in the counties of Kent, Middlesex, Essex, Surrey, and Sussex, and to cause those workmen to come to our palace aforesaid, there to remain in our service, at our wages, as long as it may be necessary. And therefore we command you to be counselling and assisting this Hugh, and completing what has been stated, as often and in such manner as the said Hugh may require." (See Britton's *West. Pal.* p. 170.) The illustrious Hugh seems to have been a designer ; for in the books, (25 Edward III. April 30,) is the following entry, "to H. de St. Albans, ordering or *designing* the drawings for the painters, one day, 1s."

<sup>2</sup> See Carter's *Etchings*.

the reign of Henry VIII. there was a chartered society of painters ; and in the seventeenth of Elizabeth it was moved in the House by Sir G. Moore, "that a bill to redress certain grievances in painting be let sleep, and be referred to the Lord Mayor, as it concerned a controversy between *painters and plaisterers ;*" and Sir Stephen Jones stood up and desired that the Lord Mayor "might not be troubled, and *it seemed to go against the painters.*"

The painters who complained that the plaisterers used their colours, and took the bread out of their mouths, go on to say, that in the nineteenth of Edward IV., that is in 1480, there were orders issued "for the use of *oil and size,*" and that the "painters' only mixture was *oil and size,* which the plaisterers do now usurp and intrude upon." In their petition they observe with the greatest simplicity : "Workmanship and skill is the gift of God, and not one in ten proveth a workman, and that those who cannot attain excellence must live by the baser part of the science." They add that "painting on cloth is *decayed ;* that this art is a curious art, and requireth a good eye, and a stedfast hand, which the infirmity of age decayeth, and then *painters go a-begging ;*" and then they conclude the petition to the House by this remarkable passage : "*These walls thus curiously painted in former ages the images so perfectly done, do witness our forefathers' care in cherishing this art of painting.*" "This bill," said Sir Stephen Jones, "is very reasonable and fit to pass," and so it did.<sup>3</sup>

The above extract, proves that in Elizabeth's reign the historical attempts were alluded to, *as belonging to former*

<sup>3</sup> See Sir W. Monson's *Account of the Acts of Elizabeth*, 1632, British Museum.

*ages*, viz. from the tenth century downwards; that the House of Commons praised the wisdom of those times in cherishing painting; and that this wisdom the Reformation had obviously discarded.

In 1538, Henry issued an order against the use of pictures and statues to impose on the people; yet pictures are called "bokes for unlearned people." In 1542, in his letter to Cranmer, the king tries to restrain the destruction of pictures; but it was too late. In the reign of Edward IV. the Duke of Somerset fined and imprisoned all those who possessed pictures of religious subjects. To such excess had the fury of the people been excited, that the recorder of Salisbury, Mr. Henry Sherfield, was fined L.500, and imprisoned in the Fleet for not breaking a painted window in Salisbury Cathedral. Walpole says that one Bleese was employed at 2s. 6d. a-day to break windows at Croydon; and in Charles I.'s reign it was ordered,<sup>1</sup> that all pictures having the second person of the Trinity should be burnt, and that all pictures having the Virgin should share the same fate. Cromwell stopped this barbarity, and it was owing to the self-will of this extraordinary man that the Cartoons of Raffaele was bought in for L.300, at the sale of Charles's effects.

Thus it is clear the art was stopped by the Reformation. In St. Stephen's Chapel, before the alterations made some years since, there were figures painted on the walls, as excellent as any figures in the Campo Santo, and perhaps executed about the same period. In Elizabeth's reign, as we have seen, historical art is referred to with sorrow in the House, as a thing past but which had existed; and in the same reign, says Hillier, "men induced by nature," to pursue high

<sup>1</sup> See Journals of the House, 23d July 1645.

art, "have been made poorer, like the most *rare English drawers of story works*." Now, Hillier would not have said this, if it had not been true that the drawers of *story works* were principally *natives*.

In Henry VII.'s time, Torrigiano, the same youth who had felled Michel Angelo to the ground in the gardens of Lorenzo and shattered his nose, was in England, and executed important works. In the time of Henry VIII., commissions for high art being over, Holbein devoted himself to court portrait-painting, though in the city he painted some large pictures. Rubens' and Vandyke's visit excited Dobson, a capital painter of a head; but although Oliver was distinguished as a miniature painter, and although there are designs at Oxford, by English painters, no one genius seemed to arise till after Lely and Kneller had succeeded Vandyke. Cooper was the first English painter employed in foreign courts as a miniature painter. Thornhill, a man of talent, and a member of the House, forms the link between one race and another; and then sprung up Hogarth, Gainsborough, Wilson, West, and Barry. As usual, when Reynolds and Hogarth had for ever rescued Britain from all doubt as to her genius, without an academy of any description, a royal academy was founded to produce more genius, just as had been done all over Europe; and no man equal to Reynolds and Hogarth has since appeared.<sup>1</sup> After the academy was founded at Milan by Leonardo, no genius like his appeared. After that of St. Luke was founded at Rome, Raffaele and all being dead, no one came forth. After an academy had been founded at Parma, Corregio being gone, nobody appeared.

<sup>1</sup> Wilkie was not produced at an academy, but at Graham's school, Edinburgh. Now this school is an academy with all its pride, and nobody will come of it.

After a national academy was founded at Venice, and royally endowed, genius fled. The same thing happened in Ferrara, Modena, Florence, and Naples ; and also in France, Spain, and England. Need further evidence be sought of the uselessness of such institutions ?

In 1711, there existed a school, of which Kneller was the head, whilst Vertue the engraver drew in it. After 1724, Sir James Thornhill opened a school in his own home Covent Garden, and so did the Duke of Richmond at Whitehall Privy Gardens. Sir James proposed to Lord Halifax to found a royal academy, but without success. At Sir James' death, the school was broken up, and the artists were again left without instruction ; when, for the purpose of studying the living model, they hired a room in Greyhound Court, Arundel Street, and Michael Moses was the conductor of it. Here they were visited by Hogarth, who was so well pleased, that a union of the whole body took place, and they removed to Peter's Court, St. Martin's Lane. The number of members amounted to a hundred and forty-one, each paying an annual subscription. There was at the time a great deal of happy fellowship amongst the artists. Reynolds, who was a member, with Hogarth and others, adorned the Foundling Hospital ; and the public were so interested, that the society thought they might venture on a charter, which was obtained, and there was established by law a government of twenty-four directors, annually elected, including the president, by the whole body and out of it. An united exhibition having begun, (the constant source of irritation, for every man cannot have his works in the best places,) squabbles arose ; and the directors finding the benefit of being able to hang their own works and those of their friends in the best situations, intrigued to keep their places another year. This was foolishly granted ; and every



subsequent year finding themselves becoming a match for the constituency, they kept their places for eight years, in defiance of law ; so that at last it was found that the men elected to preserve order and law, had been the grossest violators of both. With the feelings of independent freemen, the constituencies resolved to endure this no longer ; when, to prevent collision, it was agreed to refer the point to the Attorney-General, De Grey, both parties pledging themselves to abide by his decision. De Grey gave it against the directors, and these honourable men then refused to keep their word. The constituency met, and violently expelled sixteen of them ; but before resigning, these gentlemen met secretly, and fearing exposure, tore out and destroyed the minutes from the 19th November 1764, to the 11th March 1765, and from the 17th of June 1765, to the 21st of March 1766. They then went to the king, George III., whom they persuaded that the chartered body was republican ; and that there was no hope unless a royal academy was founded, with the number of members and voters limited to forty. The king, without inquiry, foolishly yielded to their cunning suggestions, and founded an academy with forty members ; the other eight directors resigned directly, and the whole twenty-four were made R.A's. Thus by this limited number were framed the present exclusive law and constitution, and all the obnoxious regulations passed, which had been checked by the sense of a constituency ; and thus the art of England received a blow more fatal than at the Reformation. The weakness of the nation has been gratified to an excess by this interested assembly, to the ruin of their taste and judgment ; high art has gone back, and is going back further every year, by the struggles of these men to keep up their monopoly, in defiance of the increasing intelligence of the

people, which they fear, and which will yet be their utter destruction. In this affair Reynolds behaved with great meanness. He promised to stand by the constituency; yielded at the offer of a knighthood; was afterwards justly punished, by being compelled to resign; and foolishly complained of ingratitude which he had deserved.

In order that the state of art in Great Britain may be rightly understood, this authentic detail, taken from pamphlets published at the time, especially that of Sir Robert Strange,<sup>2</sup> has been thought necessary; and it will not appear tedious, if it be considered that, for the sake of the art of our own country, it is but just that particulars should be ascertained. The effect of the academy has been pernicious. Imitating the example, all the eminent provincial towns have established exhibitions instead of schools; and every year the annual exhibition in the metropolis is repeated in the provinces, with but little addition to that which proved unsaleable in the London show. Hogarth opposed such a conclusion, and from the beginning predicted its effect, which has happened to the very letter; and when Reynolds began to perceive the truth, he acknowledged his error, and said to Sir George Beaumont, that "a party was gaining ground which would ruin the art."<sup>3</sup> If the detail of every other academy in Europe could be thus laid open, the same intrigues, the same despotism, the same injustice, and the same want of principle would be found at the bottom; and Europe would no longer wonder that academies never have produced a Raffaele.

<sup>2</sup> See Sir Robert Strange's pamphlet, and another published in the year 1771, by Dixwell, St. Martin's Lane, entitled "On the Conduct of the Royal Academicians," in the British Museum.

<sup>3</sup> This was told the author by Sir George; and has since been confirmed by his pamphlet, "Concise Vindication," &c. in British Museum.

The honest and straight forward constituency being thus left as it were unprotected by the king, it was soon deserted by the nobility and the public, and shortly escaped notice altogether; though such a man as Hogarth had improved his knowledge by drawing in its schools. The literary splendour with which Reynolds was surrounded, gave a glory to the Academy which it has not yet lost; and the genius of Reynolds spread a halo around it, which the artists still fancy they see, though it vanished the moment he expired. Reynolds was really a great artist; gorgeous in tone and colour, unimpeachable in composition, deep in light and shadow, beautiful in character, and the purest painter of children and women that ever lived in the art, Greek or Italian. His ignorance belonged to the period; his beauties were entirely his own; and though he overrated Michel Angelo, and has done injury to taste, by his sincere conviction that he was right, yet had he lived to see the Theseus or Ilyssus, he would have been equally candid in saying he was in error. Lord Heathfield is a portrait that need not fear any work of Titian's for men, and Mrs. Parker, a tender, sweet picture of a woman, was never equalled in sentiment or delicacy by any work of the Venetian and Roman schools. Where were children ever so completely hit as in the Infant Academy? who surpassed the propriety of his back-grounds as well as their splendour? His eye, or rather his organ for colour, was exquisite; nor is there in the whole of his works a heated and offensive tint. He did not combine essential detail and breadth so beautifully as Titian; but place one of his finest portraits by the side of any picture of Titian's, see them at the proper distance, and Reynolds would keep his station. Here, however, the praise must stop. Reynolds could have no more painted Pietro Martyre than he could have revived the martyr after he was

dead. He was not so great a man as Titian, because he did not like him remedy his ignorance, when he found it out at a much earlier age. He was always talking of what he would do if he began the world again. Sir Joshua loved society ; he was the deity of his coterie ; he liked a glass of wine and a game at whist ; and he never lost his temper because he was successful in the world, but the first time he was thwarted he got in a passion. Reynolds was a great genius in painting, but not a great man. He raised English art from the dust, and gave English artists an *à-plomb* in society which they never had before, and he first reduced the art to something like system by his discourses ; but not having moral courage to resist the formation of an academy, which *he* could have done by his influence and his genius, he compromised the art, and was indirectly the means of throwing it off its balance, which it will yet take half a century more to remedy, as Hogarth predicted.

As an inventor, Hogarth is by far the greatest of the British school ; although in aim and object, colour, surface, and all the requisites of a great painter, infinitely below Reynolds. It would be useless to detail the perfections of a man so admired all over the earth, and who will only cease to be a delight with its existence. It is astonishing how hereditary is the hatred of academies. The painters in revenge for Hogarth's opposition, swore that he was no painter, and swear so to this hour. The absurdity of this criticism can be proved by the *Marriage à la Mode*, whilst the picture of the husband and wife after a rout, is as beautifully touched as any in that class of art can be. He has not the clearness of Teniers, nor the sharpness of Wilkie ; his touch is blunt, and his colour deficient in richness ; but you feel not the want whilst looking at him ; and although his expression is often carica-

ture, yet in the above picture it is perfection. Hogarth unfortunately believed himself infallible; but his wretched beauty of Drury Lane for Pharaoh's daughter at the Foundling, his miserable Sigismunda, and his Paul before Felix, we hope convinced him of his forte. If he was *serious* in these pictures, which we very much doubt, he deserved a strait waistcoat and a low diet as the only treatment for his hallucination.

Gainsborough was another painter of great genius in portrait and landscape; but Wilson was a greater. His touch and feeling were comprehensive, though too abstracted for the vulgar, who always like polish and to put up their fingers. He used to say to Sir George Beaumont, "When somebody is dead somebody's pictures will sell better." From neglect he got into foolish habits of drinking, and died librarian to the academy. A miserable dauber called Lambert was the fashion, and his character as a landscape painter was hit by poor Wilson. He said "his trees and foliage were eggs and spinach, and nothing more;" yet Lambert got hundreds when Wilson could hardly get shillings. But where are now the immortal Lambert's works? Making fire-screens for garrets, whilst "*somebody's* pictures" adorn the houses of the great. Gainsborough was a great portrait painter and ran Reynold's hard. West's Wolf and La Hogue are the triumphs of his talent; but his great sacred subjects are inferior works. The writer of this observed to Canova in England, "Au moins, il compose bien." "Monsieur," replied the Italian, "il ne compose pas; il met des figures en groupe." He was a skilful machinist; and though there are bits of colour in his small works, rich and harmonious, his portraits are detestable, his handling unfeeling, his drawing meagre and common. He was deeply versed in nothing,



though possessing great acquired knowledge of his art without being an educated man. With respect to his being the greatest man since the Caracci, with Rembrandt, Rubens, Vandyke, and Dominichino, Guido, and Guercino since, or a little after, the idea is ridiculous and absurd. The king hated Reynolds on account of his devotion to Burke and Fox, and puffed West from sheer irritability. The king said to Hopner, "Why does Reynold paint his trees *red* and *yellow*? who ever saw trees that colour?" Hopner, who said what he pleased, replied, "Then your majesty never saw trees in autumn."

Romney, a second-rate man, had great patronage, whilst Barry, a man of great grasp of mind, had none whatever. Barry joined the Academy to oblige Reynolds, against his own convictions; was soon at issue with its selfish monopoly; opposed it; urged the propriety of devoting a portion of its funds to establish a school of colour; exasperated the intriguers by his fearless attacks; and was expelled of course as an obnoxious man, the king having been persuaded to sanction it, under the deadly hint that Barry was a radical. Barry was the protégé of Burke; and his Adelphi pictures, shewing the progress of society, though deficient in drawing, colour, and delicacy of touch, were the first work in England on the comprehensive principle of the ancients. Having neglected Burke's repeated entreaties to dissect, he suffered the consequence. His forms at the Adelphi are such as can be got by general drawings from the antique, but there is no refined knowledge of construction in them.

As a man of genius, however, Barry is not to be compared to Henry Fuzeli, the friend of Reynolds and Lavater, and one of the most distinguished and accomplished men of his time. Fuzeli was undoubtedly the greatest genius of that day.

His Milton gallery shewed a range of imagination equal to the poet's; his Satan bridging Chaos, his Uriel watching Satan, his Shepherd's Dream, his Fairies from Shakespeare, and his Ghost in Hamlet, announce him as having conceived, like Theon, *φαντασιαις*, and as being the greatest inventor in art since Julio Romano. But in the modes of conveying his thoughts by form, colour, light, and shadow, and above all, nature, he was a monster in design; his women are all strumpets, and his men all banditti, with the action of galvanized frogs, the dress of montebanks, and the hue of pestilential putridity. No man had the power like Fuzeli of rousing the dormant spirit of youth; and there issued from his inspirations a nucleus of painters, who have been the firmest supporters of the British school.

But Fuzeli, as a painter, must be a warning to all. Had he taken the trouble to convey his thoughts like the great masters, his pictures would have risen as time advanced; yet as time advances, his pictures, from having no hold on our feelings like the simplicity of nature, must sink. His conceptions, however poetical, are not enough to satisfy the mind in an art, the elements of which are laid in lovely nature; and great as his genius was in fancy and conception, inventor as he was in art of fairies and ghosts, he will never be an object to imitate, but always to avoid by young men, who are more likely to lay hold of his defects than his beauties. The finest conception of a ghost that was ever painted, was the Ghost in Hamlet on the battlements. There it quivered with martial stride, pointing to a place of meeting with Hamlet; and round its vizored head was a halo of light that looked sulphureous, and made one feel as if one actually smelt hell, burning, cindery, and suffocating. The dim moon glittered behind; the sea roared in the distance,

as if agitated by the presence of a supernatural spirit ; and the ghost looked at Hamlet, with eyes that glared like the light in the eyes of a lion, which is savagely growling over his bloody food. But still it was a German ghost, and not the ghost of Shakespeare. There was nothing in it to touch human sympathies combined with the infernal ; there was nothing at all of " his sable, silvered beard," or his countenance more " in sorrow than in anger ;" it was a fierce, demoniacal, armed fiend reeking from hell, who had not yet expiated " the crimes done in his days of nature," to qualify him for heaven. His next finest works were the two fairy pictures in the Shakespeare gallery, some diving into harebells, some sailing in Bottom's shoe ; but beautiful as they were, indeed the only fairies ever painted, still your heart longed for nature in colour, form, action, and expression. Such an union had the Greeks, and no art in the world will be perfect until it appears again. These pictures are evidences of the highest conception of the fanciful and supernatural. His Lazar House is an evidence of his power of pathos ; his Uriel and Satan of the poetical ; his Puck putting on a girdle, of the humorous and mischievous. But when Fuzeli attempted the domestic, as in the illustrations of Cowper, his total want of nature stares one in the face, like the eyes of his own ghosts. Never were the consequences of disdaining the daily life before your eyes, or of affecting to be above it, so fatally developed as in this series of design ; though in comparing with him another eminent artist, namely, Stothard, who, in sweetness and innocence, was his decided superior, Fuzeli surpassed him in elevation and reach of mind. In the pictures of Stothard, who painted equally well without life before him, there is not the same extravagance, yet there is almost equal want of nature in another way. Flaxman,

Stothard, and Fuzeli, are the three legitimate designers of our school, and yet not one of them was perfect master of the figure.

Flaxman's designs from the Iliad and the Greek tragedies are his finest works; and when first they appeared in Italy, they were denied to be the invention of an Englishman, as it was supposed to be impossible that any Englishman could have an imagination. But yet of some of these designs it really may be said, "Il n'y a qu'un pas du sublime au ridicule." It is extremely difficult to say whether they are in the highest degree sublime or extremely absurd. In all attempts to express the passions, you will perceive extravagance; but in comparing him with Canova, in this part of the art, Canova must yield the palm as much as Flaxman was inferior in the perfection of working up a single and beautiful figure. Though this eminent man talks pompously of Greek form and anatomical knowledge, he in reality knew very little of either; and though there is a great deal of useful matter of fact in his lectures, yet on the whole they display a wretched poverty of thinking. His book of Anatomy for students is not deep enough on the separation of muscle, bone, and tendon, and can help a young man a very little way to correct notions. The value of Fuzeli's and Opie's lectures in comparison with Flaxman's or Barry's is evident; and the superiority of Reynolds to all, except Fuzeli in his lecture on Greek art, needs not to be dwelt on.

Stothard, as an inventor in composition, was equal to all, but as a painter, certainly inferior to all. In fact he could not paint; he had no identity of imitation; he did not and could not tell a story by human passions; and his style of design showed great ignorance of the constituent parts of the

figure. But there was a beautiful and angelic spirit that breathed on every thing he did. He seems in early life to have dreamed of an angel, and to have passed the remainder of his days in trying to endow every figure he designed, with something of the sweetness that he had seen in his sleep. Peace to his mild and tender spirit. It was impossible to be in Stothard's painting-room for ten minutes without being influenced by his angelic mind. He seemed to us always as if he had been born in the wrong planet. He had a son whose etchings from our ancient tombs are an honour to the country. He fell from a great height, in pursuing his designs from some tomb in a country church, and was killed. This ill-fated artist was in every respect worthy of his father.

Never were there four men so essentially different as West, Fuzeli, Flaxman, and Stothard. Fuzeli was undoubtedly the man of the largest capacity and the most acquired knowledge; West was an eminent artist in the second rank; Flaxman and Stothard were purer designers than either; Barry and Reynolds were before all the others. In Barry's *Adelphi* there is a grasp of mind, as Johnson said; yet as a painter he was inferior to all. Though Fuzeli had more imagination and conception than Reynolds, though West put things together with more facility, and Flaxman and Stothard did what Reynolds could not do; yet as a sound, great, and practical artist, in which all the others were deficient, Reynolds must be considered the head of the British school as a painter and handler of his brush.

Opie must not be omitted, nor Northcote his imitator and contemporary, both of them men of talent. Opie, a man of great and powerful genius, issued from Cornwall at once on the town. Northcote was six years with Reynolds; and his



Arthur and Hubert, and Children in the Tower, are fair specimens of his talents. He was a malicious man, and tried to injure his greatest protector, Reynolds, and Dr. Mudge who introduced him, by allowing Hazlitt to print his (Northcote's) Conversations. There never was a deeper scheme for malignant defamation. Northcote always said that *he* did not print them, and Hazlitt that *he* did not talk them; and each vented his spite on a mutual friend, and shifted the blame to the other. Reynolds was succeeded by West, and the art sunk to the lowest depth, containing only Sir Joshua's humble imitators, when a genius broke forth, David Wilkie, who rendered our domestic school, the first in Europe; and the feeling for art has been rapidly advancing amongst the people ever since. This many circumstances unite to prove.

In consequence of the perpetual complaints from the great body of artists, the government granted a committee in 1836, to examine the cause of the superiority of France in manufacturing design, as well as the condition of high art, and to ascertain if the accusations against the Royal Academy were true or false. Never in the world were the consequences of a monopoly on the perceptions of respectable men so ludicrously developed. The president and body first denied the right of the House of Commons to examine them at all; and when the persuasions of their friends showed them their folly, their appearance before the committee presented a scene never to be forgotten in the history of English painting. On all questions of finance, they proved satisfactorily the honour of their transactions; but on all questions of art more was proved against them than ever had been suspected.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Report on Arts and Manufactures*. In this Report the im-

The resignation of Reynolds, and the expulsion of Barry; the loss of a million of money to the art on the Waterloo monument, in consequence of their not replying to Lord Castlereagh's committee; their refusal to let the artists also support their exhibition, and have the same opportunities of fitting their works for the public as at the British Gallery; and, to crown all, their rendering the school of design lately established of no avail to the mechanic, by establishing a law, that the study of the figure is not necessary for his education, though it was proved that this study at the Lyons academy for mechanics, was the real cause of their superiority to us; are such indisputable evidence against their protestations of sincerity, that it has rendered the nobility and the nation more than suspicious of the truth of all the accusations which have been made against them.

In Scotland the art is in a promising condition, and the Scottish school in purer taste than the English. Living as the artists do, in the most magnificent city in Europe, surrounded by a country pregnant with historical recollections, and guided by their own shrewd understandings, the school in Edinburgh will, before many years, take a very high rank in the art. But there is some cause to apprehend that it will be checked at its most critical period, from the usual cause, the foundation of the old curse of Europe, an academy. After having produced Runciman, Raeburn, Wilkie, and the other eminent men Scotland can boast of in art, they have been persuaded to found conventional distinctions, in favour of a select few; and, as elsewhere, the result will be the same. No Wilkie, no Runciman, no Raeburn will come from it; for the best men they now possess were eminent be-

portant subjects of Art and Manufactures are both considered; and no one with any pretensions to taste, should be without it.

fore it was thought of. The art has no business with any aristocracy of talent. Conventional distinctions, which are not hereditary, are laughable and absurd; and distinctions which are, ought to be reserved for high descent, heroic actions, landed property, or vast political genius. Such an aristocracy produces heart-burnings and injustice; for it places power in the hands of men, who are not amenable to justice for tyranny, and who cannot be reached by law, for calumny or insinuation. "Of all hatreds," said the *Edinburgh Review*, "there are none to equal the hatreds weak men in power bear to the man of genius without it." It is a curious evidence of the sagacity of the Scotch, that whilst the English portrait painters, since the death of Reynolds, were all placing kings and queens on their toes, from sheer ignorance of perspective, Raeburn, Wilkie, and Gordon have never made that mistake.

In a word, it is our decided and unprejudiced conviction, that the genius of the British people, will never have fair play or be soundly advanced, till the Royal Academy is removed, or effectually remodelled; and this will be effected either by the positive interference of the queen or the government, or by the rapidly increasing knowledge of the people. If the capital and the provinces were freed from the predominance of those men; if the honours were abolished and the constituencies restored; if the whole national galleries were turned into a great school, with branch schools in the great towns; if the Cartoons were removed to London for the occasional sight of the people, as they might be inclined to drop in; and if a Native Gallery were arranged for the best productions to be purchased as they appeared, and the House of Lords adorned with a series of grand works referring to the British constitution; then would the go-

vernment do a real good to taste, refined pleasures, and design for manufactures, such as would entitle them to the everlasting gratitude of the nation.

On the other hand, if all the ancient boroughs of the land have been obliged to bend to the call for reform; if the crown itself has been obliged to yield up the old House of Commons; if the salaries of our great officers of state have been cut down without complaint; if pensions bestowed equally for merit or for vice, are to be rigorously sifted; if the queen herself has been obliged to permit her expenditure to be questioned; are a set of men without a lease of their House, or charter for their existence, without any one legal claim to be considered as a constitutional body—are *they* alone to brave the Commons and the Lords, are *they* alone to defy and deny reformation, taking their stand upon their utter insignificance? If so, it will be an anomaly in the character of the British Legislature, which, in after times, will only be remembered as a proof of imbecility and folly, if not of something still worse than either.

We have now gone through the great leading schools of Italy, France, Germany, Flanders, Holland, Spain, and Britain, and we have taken those names only, which may be considered as leading an epoch; so that, in such a system, many eminent men must of necessity have been omitted. From the Petersburg, Copenhagen, Berlin, or Stockholm academies, no great genius except Thorwaldsen has yet appeared.

Was Italian art equal to Greek art? Certainly not. In the finest Italian there is a want of beauty in form and face, which Greek art could only supply. Poussin said, that Raffaele was an angel in comparison with the moderns, but in comparison with the ancients he was an ass. Though this is vulgar, it is in our opinion true. The ancients combined

the Venetian and Roman schools ; they considered form, colour, light and shadow, surface, expression, and execution, as all equally component parts of imitation, and all necessary to perfect that imitation which was to be employed as an instrument to convey thought. They combined the drawing and the colouring of the two great Italian schools ; as these illustrious schools tried to do when they found out their error, in pursuing one at the expense of the other.

Reynolds, from the defective practice of each school, laid it down that colour was incompatible with high art ; and he also laid it down that the ancients could not be great painters in a *whole*, though they might be in a *solo*, from the pictures on the walls of Pompeii. We do not wonder at any man so concluding before the Elgin marbles arrived ; but we do marvel at Reynolds taking the works in the private rooms of a provincial Roman city as justifiable grounds on which to estimate the extent of genius in Greek art at its finest period, five hundred years before. But after all, what are the pictures of Pompeii ? Very probably the designs in Pompeii would rank about as high in ancient art, as the designs of our paper-stainers in Bond Street would in British art. The pictures at Pompeii are no more criteria of what the art of Apelles and Polygnotus really was, than any sculpture dug up there would be a criterion of what the art of Phidias was. Reynolds undervalues contemporary praise ; but Quintilian, Cicero, Horace, Juvenal, Strabo, Polybius, and Pausanias, Valerius Maximus, Ælian, and Pliny, were not contemporary ; and, therefore, the praises of Aristotle or of Plato who were, justify the enthusiasm of those who were not.

Since the works of Phidias arrived in England, we have positive evidence that the Greeks knew the great principles



of composition and grouping, as applied to painting ; because the metopes are instances of arrangement of line, that will do exactly in a picture, if the Laocoon had not shown it before. Having now seen the Elgin marbles, which the Greeks estimated as their finest work, and having found all the enthusiasm of the ancients more than borne out, have we not a justifiable ground to argue from what we *do* see in one art, that what we do *not* see in another was equally excellent ? Will any man, after seeing the Theseus and Ilyssus, doubt that the ivory Minerva and Olympian Jupiter were equally, if not more beautiful ? Why should the ancient critics have faith placed in all their decisions except those on painting ? Why should they lose their perspicacity of understanding only when they talked of this art ? After Aristotle and Plato had admired the Minerva inside the Parthenon and the sculpture outside, they might admire the pictures ; and nobody will deny them the power of making comparisons. Had the Elgin marbles and the old antique never been seen, would not the same sophistry have been put forth to question the merit of their sculpture as well as to deny that of their painting ? “ Nothing can be more perfect than Phidias,” says Cicero. “ You cannot praise him enough,” exclaims Pliny. “ He made gods better than men,” says Quintilian. “ He was skilful in beauty,” says Plato. You believe all this, because you cannot contradict it ; but the moment Quintilian says, “ Zeuxis discovered light and shade ; Parrhasius was exquisite for subtlety of line ; Apelles for grace ; Theon for poetical conceptions, (*φαιρασιος*) ; Pamphilus for mathematical principle ; Polygnotus for simplicity of epic arrangement in colour and form ; Protogenes for finish ;”—when Pliny commends Aristides for expression, and Amphion for composition, and speaks of the grand assemblage of the gods

by Zeuxis, as well as the single figures of Apelles, Reynolds replies, "Admiration often proceeds from ignorance of higher excellence, I will not believe contemporaneous praise." We answer, that admiration oftener proceeds from knowledge of superior excellence; that the most enthusiastic admirers of Greek painting were not contemporary; and that Reynolds' conclusions against Greek art are founded upon data which are altogether erroneous.

Taking the Elgin marbles as a standard, we cannot but suppose that the finest great works of Greek art had the finest drawing, the most wonderful knowledge of form, the finest grouping, and the finest expression. To this may be added, colour from Pliny, light and shadow from Quintilian; perspective from Vitruvius; fore-shortening, dwelling on the leading points, like Vandyke, and touching off the inferior parts from Plutarch; and, what was never suspected, execution with the brush from Horace, on the leading principles of the Venetians. The French used to affirm, that David's principle was the same as that of the Greeks, namely, obtruding on the attention all the superior parts, and neglecting the inferior ones. In Plutarch's life of Alexander, at the very beginning, he describes to his readers his plan of writing his lives, and concludes with this extraordinary passage: "Like painters that paint portraits, who dwell on the face, caring little about the remaining parts."<sup>1</sup> His meaning is, that he would, like painters, dwell upon the leading points in the history of great men and lightly touch off the inferior parts. Could he have made such an allusion

<sup>1</sup> ——— ὡσπερ οὖν οἱ ζωγραφοὶ τὰς ὁμοιότητας ἀπο τοῦ προσώπου, ἀναλαμβάνουσιν, ἐλαχίστα τῶν λοιπῶν μερῶν φροντίζοντες.

ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ.

for the general reader, if this had not been the practice of the great Greek painters? Again, Horace says in the art of poetry,

Ut pictura poesis erit ; quæ si *propius* stes,  
Te capiat magis ; quædam si *longius* abstes.

That is, some pictures are painted for a close, others for a distant inspection. The former, of course, are wrought up; but in the latter, the leading points are seized by a touch, leaving the atmosphere to unite. As to mere handling of the brush, this is conclusive, and shows that it was done on the same system as by Titian, Tintoretto, and Velasquez. Reynolds has quoted Pliny's description of glazing, that is, spreading a thin transparent tint over the crude colours to bring them into harmony, which was the practice of the Venetians. Another passage completes the conviction: "Adjectus est *splendor*, alius hic quam lumen, quem quia inter hoc et umbram esset, appellaverunt *tonon*." (Lib. xxxv. c. 5.) "Now was added *splendor*, a different thing from light, and which *splendor*, because it was between light and dark, was called *tone*." To the mind of an artist this is exquisite in distinction; first, the colours on the tablet were fresh, unmixed, and raw; then was spread over a transparent glaze to take off the crudeness; then this crudeness being reduced, it was called *splendor*, glowing, rich, and deep, but different from *light*, which is cold and white; and this *splendor* the Greeks called *tone*, as both the Venetians and the British denominate it. But the circumstance of *tone* being the characteristic of any school, is proof of an age for colour.

As to their perspective, let any man consult Vitruvius, (lib. vii.). Agatharcus composed a treatise on the subject; and from this hint, Democritus and Anaxagoras wrote on per-

spective, explaining in what manner we should, in appearances agreeable to nature, from a *central point* make the lines to correspond with the eye and the direction of the visual rays, and render the scene a true representation of buildings, that those objects which are drawn on a perpendicular plane, may appear some retiring from the eye, and some advancing towards it. From a passage in Plato, it is clear, that the Greeks carried the illusions of theatrical perspective to a much greater extent than, in consequence of some bad landscape discovered in Herculanium, has been supposed."<sup>2</sup> That they foreshortened is clear, from Pliny's description of a bull coming out of a picture frontways.

The inferences to be drawn from all this, are, first, from Plutarch and Horace, that the Greeks had execution like Titian and Vandyke; secondly, from Pliny, that they must have had fine colour, (lib. xxxv.); thirdly, from Quintilian, that the principles of light and shadow were understood, (lib. xii.); fourthly, from Vitruvius, (lib. vii.), that they had sufficient perspective to make objects recede and advance; and fifthly, from the Elgin marbles, executed by and in the school of Phidias, who was first a painter, that they had expression, form, and composition. If the three most important can be proved, as they can, and colour, light and shadow, and execution, more than inferred; what right has an eminent English portrait-painter, grossly deficient as a painter of high art, to assert, that they could not be great in extensive compositions, because the painted walls of a provincial city gave no evidence of such excellence in their private houses? forgetting that these were executed five hundred years after the eras of Greek perfection, when Greece was a Roman pro-

<sup>2</sup> *Theatre of the Greeks*, p. 262, 3d edition, Cambridge.

vince, when her cities had been sacked, and her art was talked of as a wonder that had passed away.

The principle laid down for high art has been, that the lower addresses the eye and the higher the mind, and that the union of the two was incompatible ; whereas, the true principle surely is, that both styles address the mind through the eye, but in different ways ; the lower walk making the imitation of the actual substance the great object of pleasure only ; and the higher walk making imitation the means of conveying a beautiful thought, a fine expression, or a grand form with greater power. The imitation though more abstracted must not be less real or effective. Sir Joshua Reynolds affirmed, that the look of truth which fine colour, light and shadow, and reality gave, distracted the eye from the poetry of the conception or the depth of the expression. But it may be maintained, that in an art, the elements of which are laid in imitation, the beauty of an expression, the grace of a motion, and the sublimity of a conception, will be *increased* in proportion to the look of *reality* in the objects ; and the practice of all the great Greek painters, and of Raffaello and Titian in their latter works, (the Transfiguration, and Pietro Martyre), proves that they had come to the same conclusions. Yet Reynolds, with his usual sagacious policy, appears to waver lest he should be wrong. " There is no reason," says he, " why the great painters might not have availed themselves with caution and selection of many excellencies in the Venetian, Flemish, and Dutch schools ; there are some not in contradiction to any style, a happy disposition of light and shade, breadth in masses of colour, the union of these with their grounds, and the harmony arising from a due mixture of hot



and cold tints, with many other excellencies which would surely not counteract the grand style." And then he concludes that "a subdued attention to these excellencies must be added to complete a perfect painter." This is all that is contended for. So far from these excellencies being incompatible with grandeur of style, they are essential to it, they are the elements and the basis of it, they cannot be left out, or if they are, the style is deficient, absurd, and not founded in nature. There is not the least doubt that the Greek painters considered the power of imitating natural objects by colour, and light and shadow, as necessary and requisite in preparatory study as drawing or composition; and the greatest painters in the grand style in ancient Greece, were just as capable of imitating still life as the possessors of it now.

It may, therefore, be fairly deduced, that the Greeks possessed all parts of the art, and none particularly to the exclusion of others; that, therefore, all parts of the art, in due subordination, may be considered as essential to an artist of the highest walk, as also in the more humble department; and that the system of Reynolds, which excludes identity and power of reality from judicious imitation of the objects painted, combining colour and light and shadow, as well as expression and form, is *false*, and should be exploded from all systems where art is considered as a matter of importance to the dignity or glory of a nation.

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**EDINBURGH :**  
**Printed by BALFOUR and JACK.**

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