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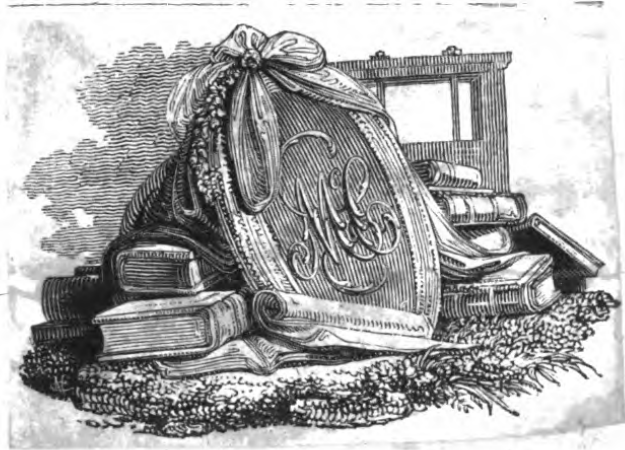
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BOUGHT OUT OF THE
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RHYMES ON ART;

OR,

THE REMONSTRANCE

OF

A PAINTER:

IN TWO PARTS.

WITH

NOTES, AND A PREFACE,

INCLUDING

STRICTURES ON THE STATE OF THE ARTS, CRITICISM,
PATRONAGE, AND PUBLIC TASTE.

BY

MARTIN ARCHER SHEE, R. A.

Quis leget hæc?—Nemo hercule, nemo. *Persius, Sat. I.*

The Muse desponding, strikes her lyre in vain,
She finds no ear at leisure for the strain;
Art's toiling sons their slighted stores unfold,
Each eye is vacant, and each heart is cold. Part II.

THIRD EDITION.

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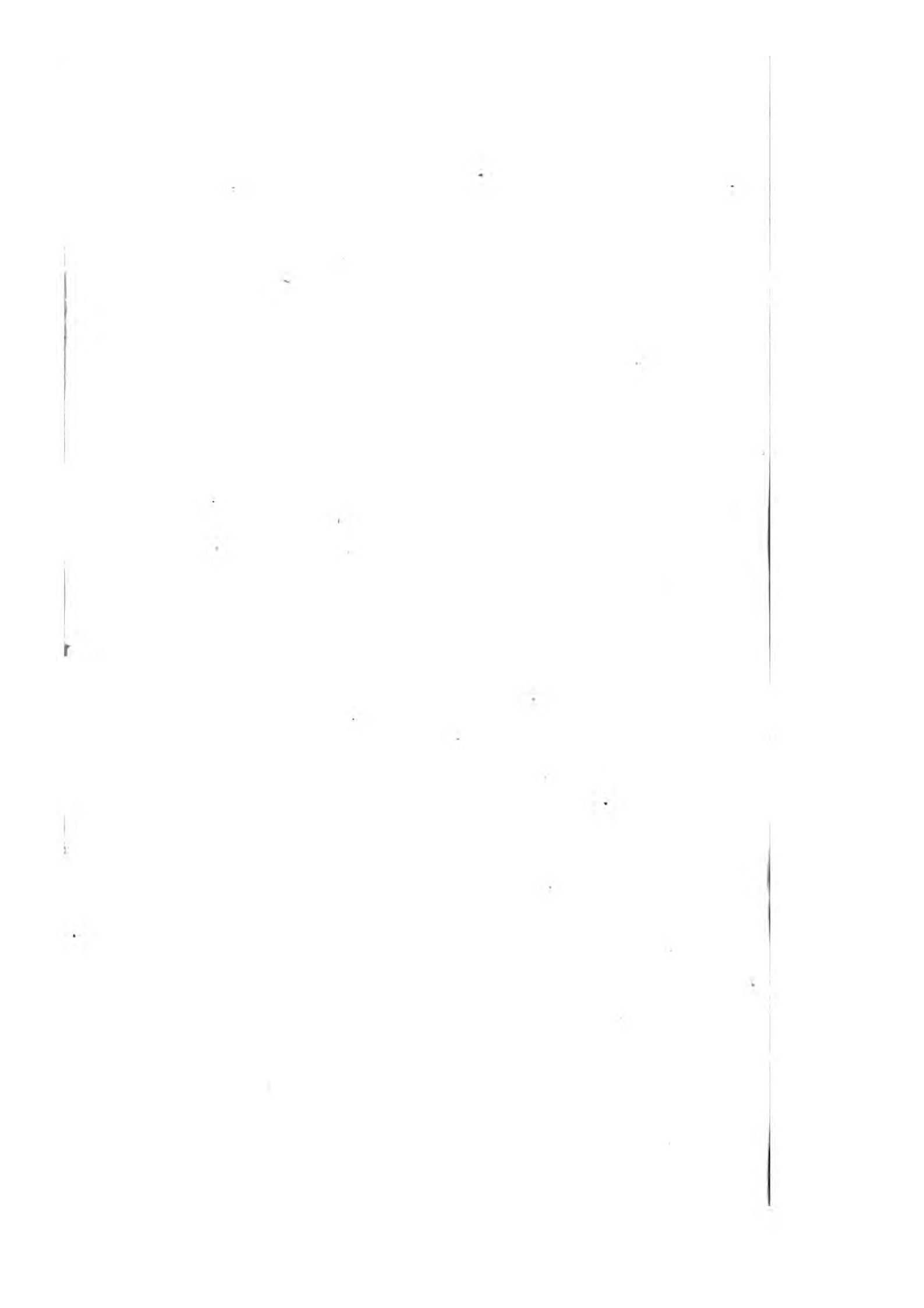
1806.



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PREFACE.

FEW writers have the confidence to appear before the public for the first time, without attempting in some degree, to excuse or account for their intrusion.

Why do you publish? is a question always anticipated from the reader; and to answer or evade it is most commonly the business of the preface.

To speak, indeed, with propriety, either from the press or the rostrum, requires qualifications from nature and education, which, perhaps, it is some degree of arrogance to suppose we possess. He, therefore, who voluntarily presents himself in the character of an author,

“ Who dares ask public audience of mankind *,”

should be sensible, that he gives a proof of confidence in his own powers, which both occasions,

* Young.

and authorizes an investigation of them, that no deprecating introduction can, or ought to prevent. If he will start from the crowd, jump on the literary pedestal, and put himself in the attitude of Apollo, he has no right to complain if his proportions are examined with rigour; if comparisons are drawn to his disadvantage; or if, on being found glaringly defective, he is hooted down from a station which he has so unnecessarily and injudiciously assumed.

A conviction of this perhaps, it is, which has so often occasioned young writers eagerly to assure the public, that they have come forward with reluctance; that they have been, as it were, thrust upon the stage, under all the embarrassment of conscious incapacity and anxious trepidation. In the hope of disarming censure by diffidence, and obviating the imputation of presumption, it became a kind of established etiquette for a virgin muse to bind up her blushes in an introductory bouquet, and present them to the reader as an offering of humility and conciliation.

But the good sense of the present day has in a great measure, exploded as idle and impertinent, this species of literary affectation. Whatever a writer may profess, praise or profit will always be considered his real motive ; and when he has once overcome his feelings so far as to venture upon the public stage, if his other merits are only in proportion to his modesty, he will find that he has overrated his pretensions.

An author should disdain to fight under false colours, or owe his security to any thing but his strength ; his object is not to escape with impunity, but to acquit himself with credit ; and it can neither provoke his fate, nor prejudice his reception, to avow honestly, that he has more ambition than prudence ; that he pants for distinction, and pursues it at the hazard of disgrace.

His valour, surely, is not much to be respected who cries out “ Quarter ! ” on coming into the field.

Under the impression of these sentiments, the

author of the following little work would have sent it in silence to its fate, if the evident incompleteness of the design proposed in the first page of it did not require some explanation; he would have dropped his bantling at the public door without a word, but for some strong marks of mutilation, for which, that his offences may not experience unnecessary aggravation, he thinks it prudent to account.

It is proper, therefore, to state to the reader, that the following pages include the first book of a poem in four books, written on the subject of painting, in which, more particularly, the early progress of the student is attempted to be illustrated and encouraged.

But though the author has found some pleasure in the composition of his work, he is not quite convinced that the public would participate in that sensation if he submitted it to their perusal. How far such an article of his manufacture may be acceptable in the market, he confesses he is unable to determine; and although he has received some favourable intima-

tions from his friends on that head, yet he lays but little stress on assurances so often found to be fallacious.

Before he obtrudes upon the public, therefore, a more extensive publication, he wishes to ascertain, in some degree, how far he may be qualified for his subject, and how far his subject may be suited to the taste of the time. As an experiment to these ends, and as affording an opportunity of touching on some points connected with the present state of the arts, he has been induced to publish the first book of his intended work, with some additions necessary to its independent appearance.

Though, with respect to his general plan, it may be acting somewhat like the man who put a brick in his pocket, in order to enable a purchaser to form a judgment of his house, yet he offers the present production as a fair sample of the commodity he deals in ; he sends it up as a small balloon, to ascertain the current of air before he commits himself to the mercy of the elements in his larger and more hazardous machine.

It happens conveniently enough for this purpose, that the portion of his work now published admits of being detached from the remainder without any great violence, as it is not so much a part of his plan, as an introduction to it; and contains also, a remonstrance in favour of pursuits which, unfortunately, have been of late but little distinguished by public notice or protection. It is here, indeed, that the author feels more particularly interested; — that the collateral subject has gained upon the principal; — that the incidental has superseded the direct. It is here, that he could wish himself possessed of powers adequate to what he conceives the importance of his theme.

Every person interested for the fine arts, or concerned for the reputation of his country, must perceive with more than regret, at the present moment, a growing disregard to the fate of the one, which cannot fail materially to affect the splendour of the other. All patriotic interest in the cultivation of British genius appears to be at an end; those who should be the patrons of artists have ceased to be even their

employers ; “ cedant arma togæ ” —the painter gives way to the picture-dealer : they who possess taste are indifferent, and they who pretend to it are hostile.

This general blight of the field is the more to be lamented, as, though the season has been cold, and the crop unsheltered, yet the harvest promised to be abundant.

In sanctioning the establishment of the Royal Academy, and graciously condescending to place himself at its head, his Majesty has done much to promote the interests of the arts in his dominions, and has displayed a beneficent desire to recommend them to attention and respect. Although the contracted scale of that institution, and its dependance for support on the exertions of its members, necessarily exclude many of the advantages which otherwise might be expected to result from it, yet, had the distinguished honour conferred upon it in this instance, been seconded by the sensibility of the public, and the generous patronage of our nobility and men of fortune, enough might have

been done to reflect credit on the generosity, as well as the genius of the nation.

But, unfortunately, the august example set by the Throne has not had the influence which might have been expected; and while the artists of Great Britain maintain by the profits of their united labours, an institution, from which their country derives both credit and advantage, they are themselves neglected, unsupported, and unemployed.

In the general apathy which prevails upon this subject, and the consequences which must unavoidably ensue, there is more to be regretted than is included in the mere fate of the artist or the art: there is something to affect more general interests—to excite the reflections of the politician, as well as the feelings of the man of taste, and to implicate seriously the reputation of the country.

Whatever may be the power or prosperity of a state, whatever the accumulations of her wealth, or the splendour of her triumphs, to

her intellectual attainments must she look for rational estimation; on her arts must she depend

“ For living dignity and deathless fame.”

They are the vital principle—the breathing soul of empire, which, after its cumbrous body has decayed,—after it has “ shaken off the mortal coil” of greatness, survives in spiritual vigour throughout the long futurity of time.

“ What now of all that Rome or Athens grac’d ?
 “ In war or conquest—wealth or splendour plac’d ;
 “ Their gods,—their godlike heroes—princes, powers,
 “ Imperial triumphs, and time-braving towers ?
 “ What now of all that social life refin’d,
 “ Subdu’d,—enslav’d—or civiliz’d mankind ?
 “ What now remains ?—save what the Muse imparts,
 “ Relate their ruins, or unfold their arts.”

Their influence has been acknowledged in all ages; and their interests have been protected in all countries, in proportion as man became more enlightened, and the principles of society have been better understood.

“ *Sunt lacrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.*”

The present, and the future, are alike within the grasp of their power; they humanize the

tempers of the living, and they perpetuate the memory of the dead. They are the crystals of immortality, in which all the forms of greatness are imperishably fixed to gratify the wondering eye of time.

If there be a nation in which we might expect more particularly to behold their powers protected with public solicitude, and their advancement a general concern, — it is Great Britain ; for what other state has such a treasure of reputation to confide to their charge? — such triumphs to transmit — such heroes to commemorate ? Where shall we find in such glittering abundance the materials of renown ? Had the ancients possessed them ? had Greece or Rome, in the zenith of their glory, been able

“ To boast the heroes, statesmen, bards divine,
 “ That bright in Albion’s happier annals shine !
 “ What wondrous works had grateful taste essay’d !
 “ What monumental miracles display’d !
 “ What trophied arches — temples taught to rise !
 “ What sculptur’d columns proudly pierc’d the skies !
 “ What art achiev’d ! — what rocks to statues sprung !
 “ What climes had echo’d, and what pæans rung !”

In Great Britain, however, the fine arts seem never to have been viewed by the public as a national object, nor to have experienced from the state that paternal protection, which less prosperous countries have been forward to bestow*. We have been always cold, and at the

* In the Academic Correspondence, for 1803, (a work for which the Members of the Royal Academy are highly indebted to the liberal zeal and ability of Mr. Hoare, the Professor of Foreign Correspondence, and the regular continuation of which, it is to be hoped, will be encouraged and assisted by every means within the reach of that establishment,) we find the following communication from the Secretary of the Imperial Academy of Petersburg: "The munificence of our sovereigns is unquestionably the most solid and infallible support that can be found for the advancement of our artists. Influenced by this principle, his Majesty the reigning Emperor has deigned not only to increase the salaries of the professors and other persons employed in the Academy, but still further to extend his bounty, by lately appropriating, for the maintenance of this institution, the annual sum of 146,000 rubles, instead of sixty thousand, formerly assigned for that purpose, and by moreover adding the yearly sum of 10,000 roubles, for the payment of those artists whose works shall be judged worthy of adorning the public institutions." And in another part of the same communication we find the following passage: "The Academy has had the advantage of experiencing a fresh proof of his Majesty the Emperor's favour, by seeing several of its members recently decorated with various orders of the empire."

present moment we are unkind to their interests.

Whether we shall be characterized hereafter, as a people no less polished in peace, than powerful in war; no less distinguished for our pre-eminence in taste, than our superiority in trade; or whether we shall relapse into rudeness, and revive by our insensibility the sarcasms of our enemies; are considerations which seem to be of no importance at present with any class of society: and there is much reason to fear, that, after having by extraordinary efforts wrested the palms from the hands of our competitors, they will be suffered, for want of common care and shelter, to wither in our grasp.

Many circumstances have co-operated to deprive the artist even of those inadequate resources which the active spirit of trade, and the scanty remains of patronage, had lately afforded to him. The disorders of the continent in particular, have cut up his interests with a double edge of operation; for while they

disconcerted all those commercial speculations, through which he might have expected employment from the printseller, they also occasioned such an inundation of foreign art to be poured upon us, as at once swept away all his hopes of encouragement from the patron.

Our arts, indeed, have experienced the fate which was denounced against our liberties—they have been invaded from every port upon the continent,—overrun by a *possé* of picture-dealers ; and yet we have seen no *defence bills* passed for their protection—no *patriotic funds* appropriated to their use—no voluntary offers of service tendered throughout the districts of Taste: dangerous principles have spread in their very camp of defence, and all the corps of criticism are disaffected: our connoisseurs are become *catamarans* to blow up our own pretensions; and even the small craft of critics are proud to shew the *colours* of the enemy, and cruise against us on our own coasts.

The superior wealth of this country, and the almost incredible prices paid here for some

celebrated collections, set in motion the trading tribes of Taste in every corner of Europe; a general rummage took place for our gratification: all the manufacturers of originals—the coiners of antiques—the dryers, smokers, and stainers, of the worshipful company of Ciceroni, were put in requisition to supply the voracity of our appetite: all rushed eagerly with their commodities to so profitable a market; and he was more than an unlucky traveller who could not turn his tour to account, and pick up a Titian, or a Corregio on his road.

Thus, has the nation been glutted with pictures of every description and quality, from the best that genius can boast, to the worst that fraud can manufacture; until all the wealth of individuals disposable for the objects of virtú has been diverted into channels from which our native arts can derive no advantage.

Who will now risk his property, or implicate his taste, in the *hopeless* encouragement of living talents? when he may increase the one, and establish the other, by purchasing pictures

of acknowledged reputation and ascertained value?

Thus circumstanced, the arts of the country have no resource left, but in the liberality—in the policy of the state; and unless some public exertion be made in their favour, they must sink under difficulties which neither zeal, industry, nor genius can withstand.

When we consider the very trifling charge, at which all the great objects resulting from an enlightened national patronage of the arts might be obtained; it seems extraordinary, that a people, generous to prodigality in every other department of expense, should, in this instance, betray a parsimony, as ungracious as it is ineffectual. Can it be thought consistent with the liberality, the dignity, the glory, or the sound and comprehensively understood interests of this great empire, to remain the only example of a civilized nation, indifferent to those softeners of human life, those refiners of the rough and drossy ore of humanity, the support and protection of which have been, in all

ages and countries, amongst the primary objects of the politician and the philosopher? Shall it be said of Britain, that from the millions supplied by her industry and wealth to answer the exigencies of the state for all the purposes of power and commerce, not a guinea can be spared to promote her moral ascendancy—her intellectual triumphs; to save her arts from utter extinction, or to co-operate with those praiseworthy efforts, which oppressed and desponding individuals have made with such perseverance and success? In vain, however, will it be expected, that they can maintain the honourable position they have taken, if timely succours are not afforded to them; if the spirited sallies of genius are not seconded by those resources of vigour and defence, which the state only can effectually supply; and which the peculiar desertion of all the ordinary powers of support has rendered indispensable to their very existence.

It is a mistake unworthy of an enlightened government, to conceive that the arts, left to the influence of ordinary events, turned loose

upon society, to fight and scramble in the rude and revolting contest of coarser occupations, can ever arrive at that perfection which contributes so materially to the permanent glory of a state.

This is the true handicraft consideration of the subject—the warehouse wisdom of a dealer and chapman, who would make the artist a manufacturer, and measure his works by the yard. The arts treated commercially, — intrusted to that vulgar and inadequate impression of their importance, which is to be found in the mass of society, never did, and never can flourish in any country. The principle of trade, and the principle of the arts, are not only dissimilar but incompatible. Profit is the impelling power of the one—praise, of the other. *Employment* is the *pabulum vitæ* of the first—*encouragement*, of the last. These terms are synonymous in the ordinary avocations of life; but in the pursuits of taste and genius, they differ as widely in meaning as coldness, from kindness—as the sordid commerce of mechanics, from the liberal intercourse of gentlemen.

Wherever the fine arts have been carried to any extraordinary degree of perfection, we find these observations corroborated. Amongst the ancients or the moderns, in Greece, in Italy, or in France under Louis the Fourteenth, it was neither the agency of the commercial spirit, nor even the more congenial operation of private patronage, that kindled those lights of genius which irradiate with such splendour the hemisphere of Taste. The spark was struck by a collision more exalted.—The impulse was given from above—from all that was powerful in the state respecting all that was ingenious in the time; attending with solicitude to the birth of Ability, fostering and invigorating the first struggles of his weakness,—stimulating and rewarding the utmost exertions of his strength—setting an example of homage to Genius, which rescued him from the ever ready contumely of vulgar greatness, and taught him to respect himself.

Noble and national objects are not to be effected by common and contracted means: the stimulus must ever be in proportion to the exertion required; and they must be themselves

honoured, who are expected to do honour to their country. What results can be looked for, from the desponding struggles of genius in a state which shews such disregard to the cultivation of her arts, as not to employ a thought on their influence, or even hazard an experiment for their protection?

The effects likely to be produced in this country, by the animating powers of national patronage, cannot be calculated, because we have had as yet no experience to govern our conclusions; but there is the strongest reason to believe, that if the field of Taste were properly protected—carefully fenced off from the common of life, it would not prove

“A soil ungrateful to the tiller’s care.” DRYDEN.

Without any adequate assistance, nay, obstructed and oppressed by circumstances peculiarly hostile to their interests, the arts of England have already advanced beyond our hopes, and taken precedence of their age. What may we not therefore anticipate from their exertions, if they shall be so fortunate as to experi-

ence those inspiring proofs of public estimation, which, in all former instances, have been essential to their existence.

Surely, in concerns of this kind, there can be no room for the considerations of petty economy—for the demurrings of estimate and calculation:—there is an expense which enriches and adorns a state,—and an economy which impoverishes and degrades it. The one is the enlightened policy of the merchant connected with the commerce of the world; who, calculating on the broad scale of profit and loss, comprehends remote advantages, combines complicated operations, and pours out his funds with apparent profusion, through a thousand outlets of hazardous adventure,—secure in the general result of his principles, and calmly tracing the progress of his interests through all their circuitous channels of return: the other is the shortsighted solicitude of the pedlar, whose ideas are confined to his counter; who, incapable of generalized views, or extended operations, sees not beyond the first links of vulgar advantage; but casting up in his terrified ima-

gination the paltry items of daily disbursement, suffers the apprehensions of expense to overcome the hopes of profit, till he has neither understanding to speculate nor spirit to adventure.

It is the policy of a great nation to be liberal and magnificent; to be free of her rewards, splendid in her establishments, and gorgeous in her public works. These are not the expenses that sap and mine the foundations of public prosperity; that break in upon the capital, or lay waste the income of a state: they may be said to arise in her most enlightened views of general advantage; to be amongst her best and most profitable speculations: they produce large returns of respect and consideration from our neighbours and competitors—of patriotic exultation amongst ourselves: they make men proud of their country, and from priding in it—prompt in its defence: they play upon all the chords of generous feeling—elevate us above the animal and the machine, and make us triumph in the powers and attributes of man.

The examples of her taste and genius, — the monuments of her power and glory—all the memorials of her magnificence, are to a great state, what his dress and equipage are to a great man,—necessary to his rank, and becoming his dignity ; but amongst the more trifling charges of his establishment.

What expense can be more gracious—more becoming—more popular ? can tend more directly “ to bless him that giveth, and him who receiveth,” than that which is directed to adorn and dignify our country,—which does honour to her valour and her virtue,—which calls forth the energies of her genius, and directs them to the celebration of her fame ?

Are these objects of less consequence than the erection of a public office, or the widening of a street ? Do they appeal with less force to “ men’s business and bosoms,” to their pleasures or their pride ? But were they even as trifling as they can be proved to be important, the means of attainment they require form an object too small for the eye of national economy.

A drop from the ocean of our expenditure would sufficiently impregnate the powers of taste, in a country naturally prolific in every department of genius.

As far as the interference of the government would be required, every thing necessary, or even expedient, to the liberal patronage of arts and artists in this powerful and wealthy empire, might be effected at an expense amounting to little more than the perquisites of a clerk in office, or the pension of a superannuated envoy.

To impress these sentiments on the minds of the few who may be led to look into this little volume—to stir with his pebble the slumbering lake of public feeling, on the subject of the arts, has been a strong motive for the author's publication at the present moment. He has long delayed, in the hope that superior powers would advocate the cause—that some abler hand would

“ ————Snatch the quill,
And save him on the brink of writing ill.” YOUNG.

But the children of Taste are not wealthy clients, and as yet they have had no counsel assigned them by the court. Like Curtius, therefore, he does not hesitate to plunge into the gulf of criticism, regretting only that the victim is not of sufficient consequence to appease the angry powers, and avert the fate that appears to impend on his profession.

In treating of the various discouragements which at present hang heavily on the exertions of the living artist, it was impossible to avoid remonstrating against that unkind and unpatriotic feeling towards the productions of our own time, which characterizes the criticism of the day.

To withhold from the painter the pecuniary reward of his exertions, and contract his means, in proportion as his expenses increase; to let him see those who would "cavil on the ninth part of an hair," in dealing out to him a scanty portion of depressing employment, pouring out their thousands with emulous profusion into the pockets of picture-dealers, and often bestowing

on foreign imbecility, that affluence which is sought for in vain through the happiest productions of native strength; are circumstances sufficiently mortifying to check the ardour of enthusiasm in sensitive minds. Yet these are difficulties which might be surmounted—they still leave something to glitter in the eye of ambition; though the artist's works may not be purchased, they may be praised; fame at least may crown his labours, and console him under the coarser cares of life. But to refuse him praise, as well as profit,—instead of the gracious smile of encouragement, to greet him with the frown of scorn, and, by indiscriminate censure, prove that he is tried by the inquisition of prejudice, rather than the tribunal of taste: this indeed is a state of things sufficient to annihilate his hopes, to break at once the most effective springs of genius, and extinguish the last embers of ambition.

Yet to this state, unfortunately, we appear to be arrived. Even the unsubstantial breath of praise, that “chamælion's dish,” which feeds

“promise-crammed” the delicate appetite of genius, is considered out of season, and no longer served for his support.

The balance of trade is indeed (to speak commercially) completely against us; and although the hardy progeny of Commerce and Manufacture (upon whose rough and lusty limbs the cumbrous swathings of mistaken affection act but as the fetters of obstruction and restraint) are cautiously cradled up in bounties and protecting duties—the tender offspring of Taste are left helpless, naked, and exposed.

Their situation appears a paradox; and, like the Spaniards, after the discovery of the treasures of the New World, they are impoverished by an importation of wealth. So many rich galleons of art have been brought home from the *Peru* of picture-dealers, that we disdainfully turn from our native productions; and even an ingot from the British mine is considered a metal too base for the circulation of Taste.

Our critics are transformed to antiquaries, with whom every thing is prized that is proved to be old; and the sterling currency of the day, though stamped in the mint of Genius, is cried down in favour of rusty coins and Queen Anne's farthings.

The author is aware that these observations apply principally to those, whom Reynolds so justly characterized as purblind critics, and half-learned connoisseurs; but this class has alarmingly increased of late: the hive has swarmed since his time, and while they buz for ever in our unprotected ears, they sting us in all directions.

For the liberal, the enlightened connoisseur, the artist must ever feel affection and respect; for him he toils, and to him he looks for the reward most congenial to his heart—the applause of pure feeling and cultivated taste: this just tribute to talent the true critic is ever pleased to pay; he knows what genius has to encounter; he knows the crossings and jostlings of the course, and is careful not to obstruct the

racer's progress at least, when he cannot stimulate his speed: he is in nothing more honourably distinguished from the vain pretender, than in the zealous alacrity with which he hails the candidate for fame when he is successful, and the generous indulgence with which he treats his feelings when he fails. The one is a liberal believer, who bows in rational homage at the shrine of Taste; who puts not implicit faith in authority, and brings all the dogmas of criticism to the test of nature and truth. The other is a bigot, who propagates imposture, and blindly adores, who immolates living victims on the altar of his idol antiquity, and damns the creed of others without understanding his own.

If the author has presumed to direct the shafts of ridicule against this latter description of pretenders; if he has been prompted to exclaim with the enlightened President* of the Imperial Academy of Petersburg, “*Delivrez nous, grand Dieu! de ces amateurs sans amour,*

* Count de Stroganoff—Academic Correspondence, 1803.

de ces connoisseurs sans connoissance;” he is convinced that all those will join in the prayer who do not feel its application, and who have a true respect for the taste, the talents, and the reputation of their country. Though,

“ Like the bold bird upon the banks of Nile,
That picks the teeth of the dire crocodile*,”

he has ventured to sport a little within the tremendous and devouring jaws of Criticism, he is satisfied that

“ ————Truths like these
Will none offend whom ’t is a praise to please*.”

And notwithstanding the alarming exclamation of the poet, as to the consequence of such a principle in the conduct of his rhymes,

“ Nullaque mica salis, nec amari fellis in illis
Gutta sit: O demens! vis tamen illa legi †?”

he has cautiously abstained from any expression which might be suspected of a personal allusion.

In attempting to uphold the arts of his time

* Young.

† Martial.

against the unpatriotic prejudices, that would not only discourage but destroy them, the author is proud to be so amply justified in the abilities they display. To enumerate all the merits around him, would appear to be unnecessarily diffuse; and to make a selection from them on the present occasion, might seem invidious: but he has no hesitation to assert, that from the productions of living genius at this moment in Great Britain, might be produced examples of excellence in every department of art, that would adorn the noblest collections, and reflect honour on any age or nation.

But were this even a partial opinion—were the arts at as low an ebb amongst us, as those whose interest it is to decry them would persuade us to believe, still, this circumstance would only furnish a more urgent reason why an exertion should be made to retrieve them; why we should try the effects of kindness, since coldness has so long prevailed in vain.

The object is well worth an exertion, for our morals are materially connected with our

arts, and a good taste not only refines but reforms. But as a state becomes enriched, not by the collection of ancient coins in the cabinets of the curious, but by the active circulation of its present currency; so also a pure taste is established in a nation, not by hoarding old pictures in the galleries of the great, but by the employment of its living talents, and the circulation of its living arts.

A pure taste, indeed, is of the first order of national benefits; it is a talisman which adorns every thing that it touches, and which touches every thing within the magic circle of its sway:—there is nothing too high for its influence, or too low for its attention; and while it mounts on wings of fire with the poet and the painter, “to the highest heaven of invention,” it descends with humble diligence to the aid of the mechanic at the anvil and the loom.

The ancients, sensible of its importance, neglected no means of cherishing those pursuits, through which only, it is to be effectually obtained. With them the painter—the sculptor,

were characters of the highest consequence; they held them not as the mere ministers of elegant pleasures—the curious caterers of intellectual dainties for the luxurious palate of sensibility; but as the effective agents of moral good, and mechanical improvement—as the real benefactors of society, refining its pleasures from sensuality, its luxuries from grossness, and its conveniencies from clumsiness and deformity. They honoured their talents not more in their immediate effects, than they valued them for their remote influence. They cultivated the utilities of life in its ornaments, and took the most certain mode of supplying the circulation of improvement by invigorating the source from which it flowed.

Thus enlightened in their views, they were rewarded in a degree proportioned to the wisdom which governed them. A peculiar character of elegance and propriety pervaded the whole circle of their arts, which made even trifles interesting: and so little have the moderns to pride themselves on their advancement in these respects, that to have successfully imitated

their productions, is the boast of our most ingenious manufactures.

If pre-eminence in the polite arts be a distinction worthy the ambition of a powerful state (and that it is, no enlightened observer of mankind has ever hesitated to assert); if the possession of a pure taste (which, wherever it exists, like a penetrating spirit, purifies and improves—informs and animates the whole mass of national ability, from the lowest example of its application, to the highest exercise of its power) be an object of the greatest interest not only to the painter, but to the politician—to the moralist as well as to the manufacturer, how deserving of reprehension are they, who would inconsiderately obstruct us in the pursuit of such an advantage! — who, to gratify an idle affectation of refinement, would blast the powers of genius at the moment of bloom and promise, and bury the productions of their own times under the ruins of antiquity!

To this illiberal class of critics, who delight in depreciating the genius of their country, and

endeavour to justify their ungenerous desertion of her arts, by denying the existence of those talents which they have not the spirit to patronize, the author would reply only in the words of Martial,

“Sint Mecænates, non deerunt Flacce Marones.”

Generous patronage has never yet failed to produce great artists in other countries; what effects it would have in our own, is worth an experiment to ascertain.

Thus far the author has been seduced to enlarge beyond his original purpose; but the subject springs from his heart, and pours unpremeditated through his pen. He set out with a view to a short introductory excursion, but he followed his road till he forgot his intention, and on looking back he is surprised, and ought perhaps to be ashamed, to think how far he has rambled. Indeed, when he *compares* the size of his porch to the slightness of his edifice, he fears he will be thought to have overlaid his book in his preface, as much as his notes have overrun his rhymes.

As to the reception of his performance, it may be supposed, that in the present state of things the author cannot be very sanguine ; he is too well aware of the important considerations which at this juncture, press upon the public mind.—“ *Quibus occupatus et obsessus animus, quantulum loci bonis artibus relinquit.*”

In the general and ardent attention also, to objects more esteemed at least, if not more estimable—more fashionable, if not more refined, he cannot flatter himself that his feeble voice will be heard. Yet there are a few, he trusts, who still feel an interest in the advancement of our national taste,—who may authorize him to exclaim with the poet,

“ Non canimus surdis ;”

who may catch, even from his faint spark, the generous glow of enthusiasm, and supply by their vigour, the defects of his weakness. All those who have hearts as well as heads, who are patriots as well as critics, will take part with the subject, whatever they may think of the song ; and he hopes the incompetence of

the pleader will not be allowed to prejudice the cause.

Should his unskilful bearing in the field draw forth some abler champion :

“ Should his weak strain some nobler muse excite,
He'll glory in the verse he did not write.” YOUNG.

For the execution of his work, however, he makes no apology ; not because he considers it unnecessary, but that he thinks it always impertinent. All the graces of language—all the refinements of style will not be rigorously exacted from him whose hand is more accustomed to his pencil than his pen.

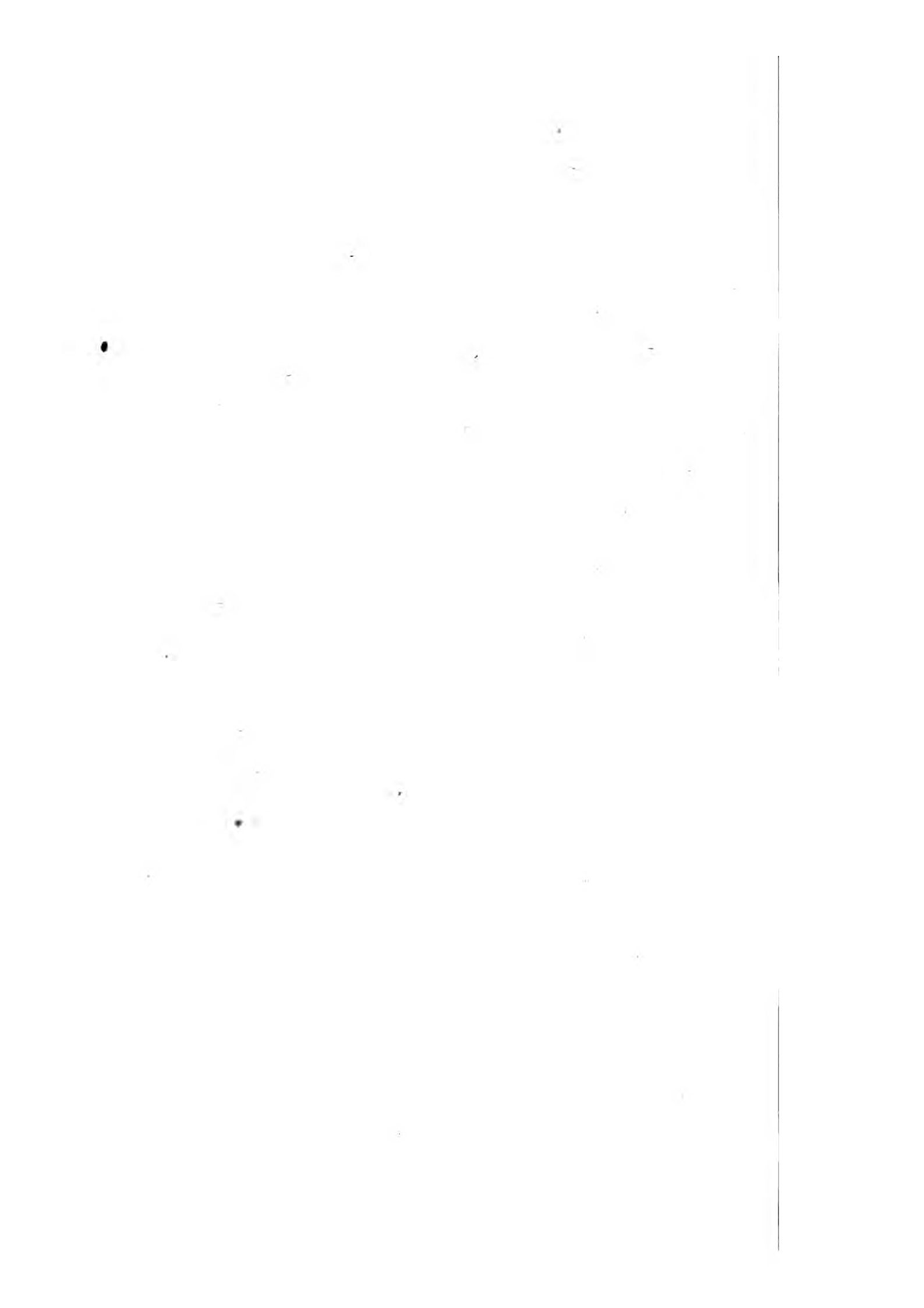
Horace has long since declared the fate of those who write bad verses—

“ *Ridentur mala qui componunt carmina.*”

Should the author be convicted as a culprit of this cast, and suffer the punishment accordingly, he thinks, after a twitch or two from his vanity, he will have good humour enough to join in the laugh. He has not, indeed, so high an opinion of his reputation, as to suppose he

can suffer much in the esteem of his readers, by an attempt to awaken the public attention to the neglected arts of his country, even though it should be proved that he had displayed his zeal at the expense of his discretion.

Satisfied that his efforts will be treated with candour, he has too much respect for the interests of literature, to wish for an indulgence incompatible with that vigilance of criticism which guards the public taste from perversion; which exposes the errors of ignorance, and punishes the pretensions of vanity.



PREFACE

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

IN offering to the public the second impression of his work, the author cannot omit the opportunity afforded him of congratulating his profession, and let him add his country, on the prospect of attaining in a considerable degree those objects which the following pages were principally directed to recommend.

The spirit which has so often, and so honourably distinguished Britons, in the promotion of liberal views and useful undertakings, appears at length to be aroused to the interests of the fine arts; and the public has had the gratification of seeing announced, the first meetings of a society expressly formed for their encouragement and protection, under the title of “The British Institution.”

It was indeed hardly possible to suppose, at a period when every object of speculation that offers even a probability of amusement, or a possibility of use, finds its full share of importance in the scale of public attention, that pursuits so eminently conducive to the polish of life, as attractive in their nature as beneficial in their influence, should remain neglected, unfriended, and forgotten.

It was scarcely credible, that the liberality of the time, so active, so enterprising in every other direction, should continue longer to turn aside from that in which its influence would be most effectual—should leave unregarded those objects only which more particularly required its support. On this subject the author's hopes were sanguine, and he has not been disappointed. He is proud to have been one of those who, like the ancient Roman, though every thing appeared to be lost, did not despair of his country, but “trusted there were yet some who felt an interest in the advancement of our national taste*.”

* Preface to the first edition, page xxxvii.

From the names subscribed to the advertisement of "The British Institution," the public must have seen, that the foundation has been laid by men whose rank, respectability, and influence amply qualify them to execute with effect whatever design they propose; and his Majesty's approbation of their plan, which they have been so fortunate as to obtain, is an additional security, that the superstructure will be both useful and ornamental to their country.

From an undertaking so patronized and so supported, much may be confidently hoped; even in the general conviction that something should be done, a good deal has been effected. Liberal ideas are abroad; the seeds of protection are sown in a congenial soil, and though the first product should suffer a little from want of experience in this kind of œconomy, yet sufficient will grow out of the general zeal to compensate the culture. Whatever success may attend the more immediate views of the British institution, the spirit which directs them is deserving of the warmest commendation; and were the advantages to be derived from such an

establishment, doubtful, or ineffectual in every other respect, yet its evident tendency to create a disposition more favourable to the living arts, and to sanction the patriotic feelings of those who may be inclined to cherish and befriend them, cannot fail to produce effects highly beneficial to the interests of taste ; and should secure to it the respect and support of all who profess a zeal for their preservation.

The nature of the plan, however, as far as it is unfolded in the printed papers distributed by the Institution, suggests many considerations, which the author's anxiety for the objects to be obtained, would prompt him to offer on the present occasion, did not his respect for the judgment of those concerned render him proportionably diffident of his own. To comment on what may be supposed the defects of a scheme as yet in its infancy, would perhaps be considered premature, if not officious. To start objections, though often the duty of a friend, is more often considered the office of a foe ; and he would much rather commend than criticise. That every thing liberal and munificent is in-

tended, he is convinced; and he hopes that every thing wise and efficacious will be the result.

But with whatever satisfaction we may contemplate this patriotic sensibility arising in the minds of the public to the interests of the fine arts; or however we may look forward in grateful expectation to the farther developement of those views so liberally directed for their advancement; there will, nevertheless, be some reason to regret, should the government hold itself exonerated in consequence, from all interference in their favour. The efforts of individuals may do much to keep alive the spirit of the arts amongst us, especially, when co-operating with judgment for that purpose; but the protection of the state only, can invigorate their existence, or animate them to those ennobling exertions which constitute the triumph of an age, and which only can be deemed correspondent with the other splendid achievements of this great empire*.

* In a review of his work, printed in the *Literary Journal* for July, an inconsistency has been attributed to the author's

On this ground principally, the author would rest his remonstrance, as most worthy of those whom he addresses, and of the cause which he

arguments, inasmuch as, that while he asserts the protection of the state to be necessary to the splendour of the fine arts, he admits, that Great Britain without this protection, has excelled her neighbours in every department of painting, &c. A short explanation of his sentiments will remove this objection. From the present debilitated state of the arts in Europe, the palm of superiority may be assigned to Britain, without supposing her arts to have attained that degree of splendour which makes the application of stronger stimuli unnecessary to their reputation; and though no man can be more sensible of the talents she has displayed, and the wonders they have wrought in the face of neglect and depression, nevertheless, the author conceives the British school will yet need some warm beams of patronage before it can be ripened to the renown of former times.

But supposing the proficiency we have hitherto made, sufficient to satisfy our ambition, and secure our fame, the author thinks that he has assigned causes, why, without some vigorous effort in their favour, the arts must now be expected to degenerate; causes which have dried up all the springs of private encouragement, and rendered it scarcely possible for us to preserve that superiority over our contemporaries which the powers of genius and industry, in despite of every obstacle, enabled us to obtain.

The question "Whether a government should interfere for

supports. He does not affect to treat the subject systematically, or to work the sum of his argument by the golden rule of arithmetic; he would rather speak to the liberal feelings than the selfish interests of society, though the appeal might be made with equal strength to both.

Whether the *employment*, he will not say the *encouragement* of the time, be not sufficient to enable the arts to vegetate in mediocrity

the protection of the fine arts" may possibly be more doubtful than poets and painters are disposed to believe, but they have at least experience to plead in defence of their opinion, since there occurs no instance of the pursuits under discussion having attained to that degree of lustre which gilds the reputation of a country, unless in periods when they appear to have been singled out as objects of particular solicitude, and adopted in a great measure as the children of the state.

The opinion of D'Alembert (quoted in the Review) on this subject, is somewhat suspicious, and the example he cites in support of it unlucky; for though Great Britain has done more than sufficient to vindicate her genius and her climate from imputation, yet at no period of her history (as far as concern the objects more particularly in the author's view) can she be adduced as "a proof that the fine arts flourish most when they are left to themselves."

amongst us? Whether painting, in particular, may not contrive to exist as the humble companion of literature—the handmaid of ostentatious typography,

“ To dress her charms and make her more beloved ?”

POPE.

Or, whether our artists may not “ get their bread in decent competence” from the profits of panoramas, or the projects of printsellers—by drudging in our modern manufactories of frontispiece and vignette—officiating as the decoy-ducks of sporting booksellers, and luring the public eye to works

“ In which the pictures for the page atone ?” POPE.

These are questions, which, whatever importance may be attached to them, the author certainly, had no intention to discuss. Neither did he design to plead the cause of imbecility, or ask honours and rewards for those who have shewn neither ambition nor merit. The mechanic who degrades the pencil, if he cannot make himself useful or agreeable to the mass of society, has assuredly, but little claim to be dis-

tinguished from any other workman who endeavours more successfully, though more coarsely, to consult their accommodation. The painter who pursues his art as a trade, and thinks when he is *paid* that he is rewarded, should certainly be content if he is allowed, on equal terms, to play at the round game of profit and loss, and shuffle his cards with the contentious crowd,

“ Who follow fortune through her filthy maze.”

These are adventurers who have indeed no claim to be allowed the odds in their favour, and whether they win or lose the paltry stakes for which they play, is a consideration of no consequence in our calculations.

The author's observations were directed to higher points. It is not for the cultivation of mediocrity he contends, but the production of excellence; not that the artist may live in ease and luxury, but that the arts may flourish in pride and perfection; that an object may be held out to the ambition, not to the avarice of the painter; and that he may be fired to such

exertions as shall immortalize his name, and shed a glory on his country.

To draw some portion of the public attention to the neglected state of the historical arts, at the present moment; and to point out some of those causes (peculiar to the times) from which their total decay may be justly apprehended, unless some vigorous exertion be made in their favour; to remind his country, that it is some part of the duty of a great state, to pursue the refinements, as the shortest road to the utilities of life, and use some endeavours towards kindling those lights by which she is to shine hereafter; to shew that it is some part of the duty of an enlightened government, to hold out incitements to superior worth; to erect a standard of honour and liberality round which the enterprising genius of the time

“ May rally, and resolve on death or fame.”

These indeed, are points, to impress which the author would willingly lay out his little skill; but he has not the vanity to think he can

do more than place the nail with his small hammer, to drive it home requires a sledge beyond his strength to wield*.

To no people, however, can such topics be

* It may, perhaps, be proper to notice here the mistake of those who have supposed that individual feelings of discontent have mingled with the author's zeal, and sharpened his remonstrance. As a portrait painter, he never conceived that he had any cause for complaint. Portrait painting has always met with encouragement in this country, at least as far as employment may be considered to answer that idea; and his portion of public favour has, perhaps, been more than commensurate to his merits. On this ground, therefore, complaint would have been as unjust as undignified; and if he had not conceived that higher interests were at stake than any which can relate to so humble an individual as himself, or even to that department of the art which he professes, he would not have had the presumption to trouble the public with his sentiments. Whatever value may be attached to his ideas on this subject, the motives which influenced their publication were as pure and disinterested as can be consistent with a slight seasoning of literary ambition; and should the objects he has endeavoured to recommend, be obtained even in their fullest extent, the line of art to which he is devoted, makes it unlikely that he shall derive from that circumstance any other advantage than what may result from contemplating the splendour of the arts and the glory of his country.

addressed with more prospect of success than to the people of this country. That they should require to be reminded of any duty resulting from liberal feelings and enlightened views, is one of those extraordinary circumstances, to be accounted for only by that inconsistency which attaches to the human character in all situations, whether considered separately in individuals, or collectively in states.

The rank which Great Britain holds amongst nations, requires that she should neglect no honourable means of distinction—that she should leave no sail unfurled that can waft her to renown. The part she plays is of the first cast in the great drama of human affairs, and demands that she should omit no characteristic appendage, no becoming ornament in the costume of national greatness.

Though power and wealth are the prime agents in establishing the consequence of a country, yet, there are subsidiary means which no high minded people will allow themselves to disregard; without which they know, that

the present may be divested of dignity, and the future must be deprived of fame. Amongst these means, the fine arts require more particularly, and requite most effectually, the protection of the state.

There is a splendor in national patronage, which, touching every spring of ambition, elevates the powers of genius, and renders the artist equal to the exertion required of him. He that is employed by his country is dignified by the occupation, and while he labours to commemorate her glory, feels that he is establishing his own. This is the stimulus which the circumstances of the time seem most particularly to require, and which, perhaps, it would be no less judicious than generous to apply.

Convinced of the incalculable advantages to be derived from the liberal encouragement and assiduous cultivation of art and science; and availing themselves of that grace and popularity, ever attached to the promotion and establishment of measures, which combine under the most flattering form of national munificence,

the most refined considerations of national interest, the rulers of a neighbouring state have taken steps to make its metropolis the general emporium of taste, and draw to its shrine the involuntary homage of mankind. They have formed plans of public splendor and utility, which demand, not our imitation, but our rivalry; which imperiously call upon us to consider, whether we will suffer ourselves to be outrun in the interesting career of pacific glory; whether we will see with supineness the arts and ingenuities of our country gradually surpassed in purity of design and spirit of execution, while nothing remains to balance against perverted feeling and degenerated taste, but barbarous indifference or unavailing regret.

With those who would leave the arts, unassisted, to find their level in society; who consult Adam Smith for their theory of taste as well as of trade; and would regulate the operations of virtù on the principles of the pin manufactory; with all those, in short, to whom this world is but as one vast market—a saleshop of sordid interests and selfish gratifications, ar-

guments drawn from the importance of the arts as objects of taste and refinement, will have little weight; and as objects of utility (in the vulgar sense of that word) all apprehensions of their decay will appear groundless or exaggerated: but they whose minds are enlarged to general views, who enter into the character of those pursuits, and are acquainted with their nature, their history, and their influence, will acknowledge their power, and deprecate whatever tends to their depression.

The level of the arts is not to be looked for in the feelings, nor to be determined by the wants and caprices of the million; it is to be found only on the summits of civilization—in the affection and admiration of minds elevated to a due sense of their value, and satisfied that not to distinguish, is to degrade them*.

* It has of late become so much the fashion, to view every thing through the commercial medium, and calculate the claims of utility by the scale of "The Wealth of Nations," that it is to be feared, the Muses and Graces will shortly be put down as unproductive labourers, and the price current of the day considered as the only criterion of merit.

Yet let us not justify the taunts of our rivals, and deliver up

It is much to be hoped, therefore, that those who may think the arts justly entitled to the protection of an enlightened government, and who may feel disposed to come forward in support of their pretensions, will not allow themselves to be diverted from prosecuting so honourable a cause, or confine their zeal exclusively to the furtherance of projects, which, however laudable and beneficial, cannot reason-

all our ideas to the dominion of trade; let us reserve a few old fashioned sentiments in this general sale of our faculties and understandings; let us, if possible, keep some few spots dry in this commercial deluge, upon which wit, and taste, and genius, may repose.

There is a commercial as well as a political jacobinism, as unworthy of the liberal merchant as of the loyal citizen; there is a levelling of the principles and feelings, as well as the ranks and distinctions of society, and perhaps, in this country at this moment, the more dangerous of the two; for it works unseen and uncensured; strikes at the ancient nobility of the mind—the privileged powers of genius and virtue, and would pull down all human perfection to be estimated according to the lowest rate of exchange. If our heads and hearts are to be overrun by a mob of mercenary sentiments, we shall have escaped to little purpose the disorganization of one revolution, to be reserved to suffer under the degradation of the other. Of a system like this, the arts must ever be the first victims; for they flourish only in the prevalence of feelings which the sordid and sel fish passions effectually destroy.

ably be expected to supersede the necessity of that stimulus which the powers of the state can so cheaply, gracefully, and effectually supply*.

The present period seems more than commonly auspicious in this respect. A disposition appears to prevail in parliament, which makes it impossible to believe that an application judiciously made would prove unsuccessful. Within the last two years, grants have taken place for objects of comparatively inferior importance, which would make a refusal as ungracious, as it would be impolitic; not only inconsistent, but unjust †.

* In touching on this subject the author cannot avoid paying a small tribute of respect to the liberal ideas and intentions of a gentleman, (Mr. W. Smyth) to whose taste and politeness artists are much indebted, and from whose zeal and public spirit the arts may yet hope to derive important advantages.

† Without meaning in the slightest degree to undervalue the very honourable and beneficial purposes for which the grants above alluded to have been made; the author conceives, that he is warranted in assuming it as a point of still greater consequence—to protect and invigorate the arts of our country; since to preserve works of genius can never tend so much to the glory and prosperity of a state, as to produce them.

To allow the treasures of antiquity to be lost through negli-

The author hopes to see the day, when it will be thought as wise an act of legislature to protect the arts, as to encourage the manufactures of the country; when it will be considered as becoming a duty of government to subsidize the powers of taste, as the powers of the continent; they will be found allies less expensive, more faithful, and almost as useful; they will make common cause with us, and furnish a formidable quota in the contest of renown.

A period of warfare, it is true, is a season of pressure and embarrassment; but it is also a season of spirit and resource. It was, surrounded by hostile alarms—in the midst of foes and reverses, that Louis the Fourteenth and his enlightened ministers formed those schemes, and created those establishments of arts and sciences, which have constituted the only true glory of their age. A number of concurring

gence, or their influence to be weakened by dispersion, argues not only insensibility but barbarism; yet while establishing granaries in which to store the greatness of other countries, let us not neglect to cultivate the growth at home.

circumstances, alarming to our national superiority, have pointed out the present as the important moment of exertion. The arts may be said to be just now within our reach; they stretch forth their hands to us with affectionate partiality—if they are looked on coldly—if they are slighted or despised, we may repent our error, but it will be too late to retrieve it.

As a body, the artists of Great Britain have some claim to the consideration of their country. They cannot be accused of troublesome zeal, or importunate solicitation. The institution they maintain is an example of their disinterestedness, and the silence they have observed is a sufficient proof of their moderation. They have long looked forward to the needful aid of national munificence; they have waited with patient expectation till they may exclaim with the poet,

“ I am so long remembered, I'm forgot.” YOUNG.

Their interests (or rather the interests of the arts) are now however in good hands; they are espoused by those who are amply qualified

to protect them, and who have influence sufficient to procure from the state such aids, as co-operating with private zeal and liberality, must draw forth in full vigour whatever the genius and industry of the nation can perform.

In advocating the cause of taste, they will have in their favour all those considerations which usually operate on superior minds: they may look with confidence to the determination of the highest wisdom and the most enlightened policy, on subjects certainly not of trifling importance, nor of temporary interest.

Let it be confessed also, that the advantages will be reciprocal, which may be expected to result from national liberality thus displayed. The light that shines will be reflected; something will be done for the credit of the country as well as for the advantage of the arts—for the glory of those who shall patronize, as well as the good of those who shall be protected.

However conspicuous and superior in conducting the affairs of empires, there is one path

of reputation as yet unopened by British statesmen;—a nich as yet unappropriated in the temple of their fame. We have had great orators and great politicians—great war ministers, peace ministers, and ministers of finance; but we have had no great patrons of the arts, or protectors of the muses—neither a Mecænas nor a Colbert.

In the eyes of the present age—in the estimation of posterity; when the claims of true greatness come to be impartially weighed, that administration will not be held amongst the least glorious, which shall be found to have stretched forth a hand to sustain the drooping genius of their country; which shall have protected the pursuits of peace amidst the operations of war, and while conducting her arms to victory, called forth her arts to emulation.

The author hopes that he appreciates too justly the value of his claims; not to be more than content with the approbation his poetical attempt has experienced from the public. As

a stranger in the land of literature, he has been received with all the rites of hospitality; and should the kindness of his treatment encourage him to repeat his visit, he trusts he will not be found neglectful, or ungrateful.

He regrets however, that the present edition, though delayed in the publication, had passed the press before his work attracted the notice of the reviewers, as had he seen their remarks in time, he would have endeavoured to profit by their judgment, as much as he has been gratified by their praise*.

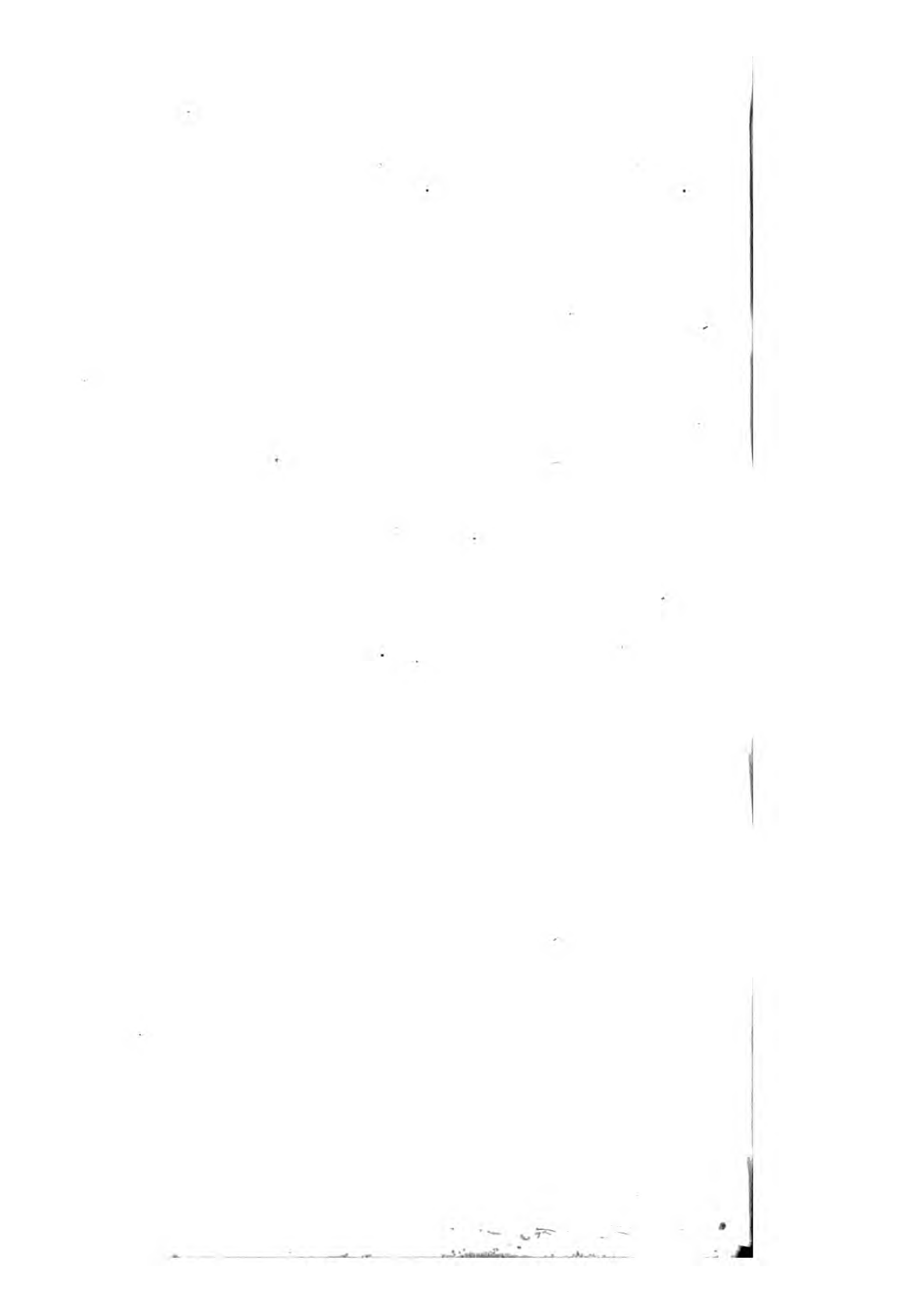
The title of his book has been generally objected to, but upon grounds too complimentary to its contents for the author to discuss. He can only say, therefore, that could he have found one calculated to convey a still more humble idea of his performance, it would not have been inconsistent with the opinion he had formed of its claims.

* In this edition some verbal errors have been corrected.

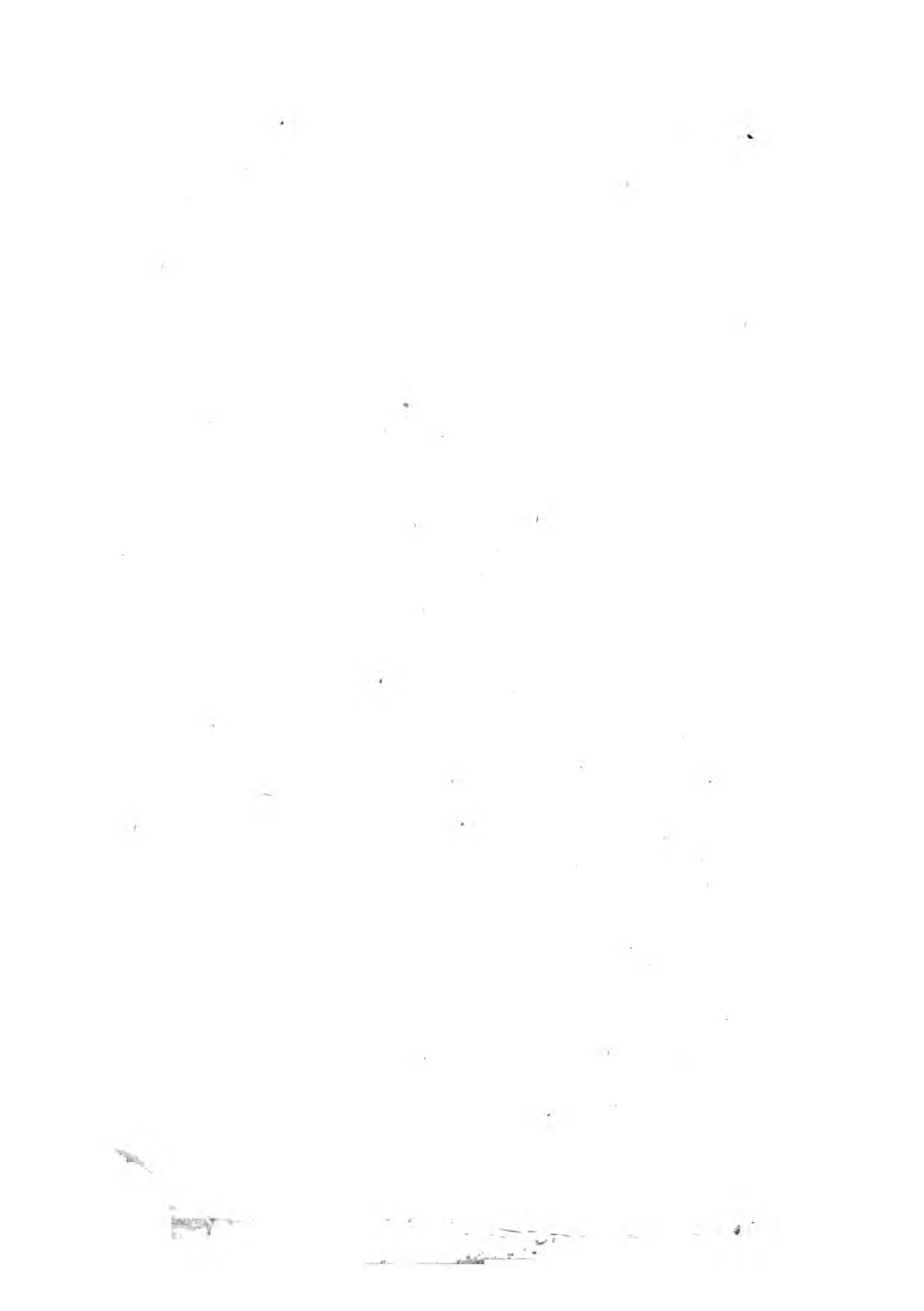
But, though he wished not to puff his pretensions, neither did he design to depreciate them: the label on the bottle certainly should not disparage the wine: and however curiosity may be disappointed in the interior of his building, it is neither his interest nor his intention to discourage her at the door. If, therefore, he continues to use a title which has been thought to have so disadvantageous an effect, it is because he conceives he cannot with propriety alter it in the present publication, as the change would give reason to expect a new work rather than a new edition.

In the remaining part of his design, however, he hopes to obviate this objection, and will endeavour that “the poverty of its titular pretensions” (to use the words of one of his most liberal critics) shall not operate to prejudice his book.

CAVENDISH SQUARE,
October 10, 1805.



RHYMES ON ART,



PART THE FIRST,

ARGUMENT.

THE subject proposed—Britain late in applying to the arts—the aspersions of foreigners on her climate and genius repelled—apostrophe to the arts, expressive of their influence on society—allusion to the establishment of the Royal Academy—address to critics, to view with indulgence the productions of native genius—allusion to departed British artists—Mortimer—Wilson—Hogarth—Gainsborough—Reynolds—The author's address and dedication of his poem to the spirit of Reynolds—the arduous task of the poet and painter stated—caution to those who mistake a transient liking, for that passionate love of painting so essential to success—the qualities necessary to form a painter—the number of pretenders to the pencil and the lyre, but particularly those who apply to painting with mercenary views, warned to desist from so unprofitable a pursuit—the arts not productive of much emolument to those who profess them—in the present day, from the coldness and fastidiousness of taste, not even affording the incitement of praise—allusion to the prosperous state of the arts in the sixteenth century, and the liberal patronage they experienced from the Medici family—apostrophe to Lorenzo de Medici, who refined the taste while he undermined the liberty of his country—the author's wish that his country may never culti-

ARGUMENT.

vate refinement at the expence of freedom—allusion to the superior progress of the arts in despotic governments—a prophecy, that Britain will furnish an example of the superior energies of genius under a free system—address to Britannia to cultivate the arts as the surest means of immortality, and add a fifth great æra to the world,



Too long our isle, though rich in stores of mind,
 Proud to be free, scarce deign'd to be refin'd;
 Still with a surly Spartan virtue frown'd,
 Nor sought to rival states for arts renown'd: 10
 But now no longer heedless we refuse
 The proffer'd garland of the Graphic Muse;
 Britannia binds her laurell'd brows once more,
 And adds the only wreath unwon before;

Line 14. *And adds the only wreath, &c.*—Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the positive merits of the English school of painting, the comparative claims which distinguish it cannot be with justice denied. Indeed, when we consider how few states around us, even so much as pretend to the cultivation of the fine arts, it is paying no great compliment to Great Britain to place her at their head. France is perhaps the only country in Europe (except our own) in which the merits of English art are not justly appreciated; so long, however, as the present meagre, debilitated style of art prevails there, we shall not be very ambitious of her approbation. The taste of the French has undergone a revolution as well as their government, and with as little advantage to the one as to the other; the changes, however, have operated in opposite directions; for as, in politics, they proceeded from servility to licentiousness, so in taste they have passed from licentiousness to servility; they have exchanged the fire, and flutter of meretricious extravagance, for the frost, and phlegm

While nations long supreme in taste retire, 15
 Confess her claims, and in their turn admire.

of timorous detail; the shackles they fondly imagined they had finally torn from their liberties, they have cast upon their arts, and the pencil of a modern French artist moves in the heaviest manacles of servile imitation. The bravura and inflation of the school of Bouchet, are succeeded by the tame constraint, the dry, sapless, statæ-like insipidity of the school of David. However enthusiastic, volatile, and unsteady the character of the French may be in other respects, in the arts they are remarkable for plodding perseverance, for heavy, dull, undeviating toil:

A patient tribe, who turn the graphic wheel
 With dog-trot diligence, and drowsy zeal;
 Minutiæ-mongers, microscopic wights,
 Whom Denner captivates, and Dow delights;
 Who spend on petty cares their puny powers,
 And live to polish pores, and hairs, and flowers;
 To place a pimple with scorbutic skill,
 To fix a freckle, and to plait a frill.

They are examples of the ill consequence of suffering theory to advance too far before practice; they reason so much about their works, that they neglect the means to execute them, and spend years of laborious idleness, in frivolous application to subordinate parts. Occupied by the plan of his edifice, the French painter forgets the superstructure to be raised upon it, and after he has amassed his materials, and erected his scaffold, discovers that he is unacquainted with his tools.

Yet while supine our gentler genius lay,
 And war and commerce bore exclusive sway ;
 Ere Taste her orb from Latium had withdrawn,
 Or yet the cliffs of Albion caught the dawn, 20
 Coxcombs, exulting, dar'd her powers despise,
 Aspers'd her sons, and slander'd e'en her skies :

They design *, however, with more diligence than we do, and have more academical knowledge of the figure; they also take more pains, and presume less upon the unassisted powers of genius. Their preparatory studies, when about to execute a large work, are more numerous and minute than can be readily credited, or conceived in this country, where, perhaps, we are too much in the opposite extreme. They, are timorous combatants, who exhaust their powers in preparation, and chill the ardour of enterprise by the coldness of precaution; we, on the other hand, are often rash adventurers, who plunge into dangers against which we have not provided, and rush into the field before we are sufficiently armed for the fight.

Line 21. *Coxcombs, exulting, &c.*]—The sagacious reveries of Du Bos, and Winkleman, on this subject, have been ably

* The drawings of Carlo Vanlœo are among the most conspicuous ornaments of the French school, and must command respect for his name wherever they are seen.—The sketches made by Vincent for his large work of the Battle of the Pyramids, are composed with skill and executed with vigor: and the Sextus, and Phædra and Hypolitus of Guerin, evince a power of expression, an eye for colouring and effect, which have gained him the admiration of his own country; and were he by a bolder effort to shake off the trammels imposed upon him by the present state of taste in France, could not fail to procure him a much more extended sphere of reputation.

But now no more th' injurious taunt is thrown;
 Her arts, triumphant as her arms, are known;

exposed by Barry, in his spirited defence of English genius. He has, indeed, combated those philosophical speculators on climate with twofold powers; he has employed his pen and his pencil with equal ability, and not only foiled them in argument, but confounded them by fact.—Vide the great room in the Adelphi.

Count Algarotti was not unwilling to compliment the superior imagination of his countrymen, as contrasted with our northern dulness. In a letter to Mr. Taylor Howe, printed in Mason's life of Gray, we find the following passage: "Cotesta maggior dose di pittura dirò così ch'entra nella nostra poesia, è forse uno effetto anchiessa della delicatezza, ed irritabilita della fibra, delli nazioni posti sotto climi caldi; onde sentono, ed immaginano più vivamente delli nazioni settentrionale, più atte per avventura, che noi non siamo; a pensare con pazienza, ad annalizare, a penetrare sino al fondo delle cose."

We cannot indeed be much surprised at observations of this kind from foreigners, when we find even amongst ourselves, men of eminence like Blair expressing similar ideas.

Blair, in his thirteenth lecture, speaking of the admiration which Cicero relates to have been produced in an assembly of Romans, by an harmonious sentence in one of Carbo's orations, adds the following reflections: "Now, though it be true that Carbo's sentence is extremely musical, and would be agreeable at this day to an audience, yet I cannot believe that an

Arous'd, her genius soars on wing sublime, 25
 Asserts her taste, and vindicates her clime.

English sentence equally harmonious would, by its harmony alone, produce any such effect upon a British audience, or excite any such wonderful applause and admiration as Cicero informs us this of Carbo produced: our *northern ears* are *too coarse and obtuse*; the melody of speech has less power over us, &c." Though it may be granted to Blair, that the effects described by Cicero would not be produced in a British audience by a sentence equally harmonious with that of Carbo, yet we are not called upon to admit the reason he assigns for it: indeed Blair himself, in the first part of the paragraph from which the above quotation is taken, accounts for this difference between a Roman and a British audience, without ascribing any part of it to the *coarseness* of our *northern ears*; for he there observes, that "in consequence of the *genius* of the Greek and Roman languages, and the *manner of pronouncing them*, the musical arrangement of sentences did in fact produce a greater effect in public speaking among the ancients, than it could possibly do in any modern oration."

If we are less sensible than the Romans to the harmony of speech, it is not, surely, because our ears are naturally coarser than theirs, but because they are in this respect less cultivated; it is not that our sense of hearing is more obtuse, but that our language is less musical. The organs of sense are to be improved by education, as well as the faculties of the understanding; we find by experience, that the eye, and the ear in particular, must be taught with considerable attention, before they are enabled to perform their functions with any extraor-

Insult! to think the land where Shakspeare sprung,
 The heav'n *he* breath'd—where seraph Milton sung!
 In strains more sweet than erst from fabled shell
 Of Orpheus old, or fam'd Amphion, fell: 30
 Where Pope, where Dryden swept the sounding lyre,
 With Maro's melody, and Homer's fire!
 Where Science, (long on weak Conjecture's wing,
 A thwarted falcon, flutt'ring from the string,)
 Loos'd by her Newton's hand, first shot on high, 35
 And perch'd amid the mansions of the sky:

dinary accuracy or refinement. The genius of their language induced, and enabled the Romans to carry the musical arrangement of sentences to a degree of nicety, which the nature of our tongue neither requires nor admits; their public orators studied all the graces of melody with the most scrupulous solicitude, and consequently the ears of their auditors became delicate and susceptible in proportion to the refinements to which they had in that respect been accustomed. May we not, therefore, in the more assiduous cultivation of the harmony of speech among the Romans, find the cause of that superior sensibility of which Blair takes notice, without examining our station on the map, or conjecturing with the philosophers Du Bos and Winkleman, what precise degree of latitude, taste, genius, and sensibility, may be found to inhabit?

Insult! to think, where valour, virtue sway!
 Where beauty sheds around her brightest ray!
 Where Reason boasts how Locke — how Bacon
 shone!

And triumphs on her philosophic throne: 40

Insult! to think this garden of the globe,
 This spangle shining bright on Nature's robe!
 From finer joys in cold seclusion plac'd,
 A torpid clime beyond the beam of taste!

On wings of fire sustain'd, th' immortal mind, 45

Nor clime controls, nor fog, nor frost can bind.
 Where freedom, man's most cheering sunshine, glows,
 Whether on Lybian sands, or Zemblan snows;
 Where life exults, with each bold feeling fraught,
 And Fancy fearless springs the mine of Thought: 50

There, blooms the soul, there, every muse delights,
 Swells her full strain, and soars her highest flights:

Luxuriant there, from moral roots arise,

Pure joys which compensate inclement skies;

Spontaneous sweets that torrid tracts endear, 55

Redress the cold, and calm the raging year.

To Albion's view what mental glories rise !
 Though winter rudely revels in her skies;
 Though fogs engender there, and frosts deform
 The agu'ish clime, an intermitting storm ; 60
 The orb of genius cheers her hardy sons,
 And bright through every sign of science runs,
 Pervades with ripening ray each art refin'd,
 And glows through all her atmosphere of mind.

O pride of culture ! rare achiev'd, and late, 65
 High-finish'd grace of an accomplish'd state!
 Ye nobler arts ! as life's last lustre given,
 Gilding earth's grossness with the gloss of heaven!
 'Tis yours to crown complete the social plan,
 And harmonize the elements of man ; 70
 To raise in generous breasts a glow divine,
 And polish every gem of virtue's mine.
 As when long shut in shades, the eye of day
 Shoots from his lids of cloud a sudden ray,
 Swift o'er the sombre scene effulgent flies 75
 The golden gleam, and skims along the skies,



Flames up the mountain, flashes on the main,
 Till one broad glory bursts upon the plain ;
 Thus, lowering life the liberal arts illumine,
 Adorn its prospects, and dispel its gloom; 80
 Chase passion's scowling tempests from the scene,
 And o'er the mind's horizon shine serene.

By worth unaided won, we mourn no more
 Their long-felt absence from our sunless shore;
 In yonder pile*, by royal bounty plac'd, 85
 The Graphic Muse maintains the throne of Taste,

* Somerset House.

Line 85. *In yonder pile, &c.*—They who have 'examined with unprejudiced attention the progress of art in this country from its first introduction, cannot but acknowledge the rapid strides of improvement made within the last fifty years; and particularly since the establishment of the Royal Academy. The influence of this institution as a seminary of instruction, and the advantages its annual exhibitions afford by promoting emulation, and furnishing the student with an opportunity of seeing his faults, and displaying his merits, are sufficiently exemplified in the general ability apparent in every department of art. Though we cannot at present boast of a Raphael, a Reynolds, or a Vandyke, yet we have many eminent artists,

Surveys again reviv'd, her ancient powers,
 And smiles as genius there unfolds her flowers.
 Though public favour still but feebly glows,
 And no fond care th' incumber'd state bestows; 90
 Surpris'd she views in vigorous verdure rise,
 Th' exotic blooms that bless'd serener skies;
 And lays exulting, as the fruits refine,
 Her annual offering at the public shrine.
 Disdain it not, ye critics! nor decry 95
 Your country's arts, nor view with adverse eye;

whose names will be inserted with honour in the records of fame; and there is a general diffusion of respectable talents, which, if urged forward by the generous stimulus of public favour, cannot fail to make this country as pre-eminent in the pursuits of taste as she is already distinguished in the paths of science and philosophy. Excellence is always comparative, and to estimatè justly what we are, it is necessary to consider what we have been. Under disadvantages of national neglect, and public apathy, which were never before surmounted in any country, the English school has grown and ripened within the reign of his present Majesty to a degree of strength and maturity, which may fairly challenge comparison with the past state of art in this country, and the present state of art in every other country of Europe.

Indulgent still, the rigid brow unbend,
 And e'en in censure shew that you befriend* :
 Prize not the skill of foreign realms alone,
 Nor think it *taste* to stigmatize your own ; 100
 With generous bias lean to British art,
 And rather wrong your judgment than your heart.
 Nor deem in soft beseeching tone the Muse
 From kindness courts, what candour might refuse ;
 No, from her soul though rising to her eye, 105
 What times remote, and realms around supply,
 She hails with honest pride her country's claim,
 And calls on taste to ratify her fame.

Yet while exulting o'er each bold essay
 Of British genius brightening into day, 110
 In fond remembrance flows the grateful tear,
 To think what stars have fallen from our sphere.
 Lo! pensive leaning o'er th' illumin'd page,
 Where History meditates the madd'ning age,

* *At, pater ut gnati, sic nos debemus, amici*
Si quod sit vitium, non fastidire. Horace, Sat. I.

And mourns her Mortimer: while, kind too late, 115
 Relenting Fortune weeps o'er Wilson's fate ;

Line 115. *And mourns her Mortimer, &c.*]—The talents of Mortimer were prominent in his day, and generally directed to the higher objects of his art. King John signing Magna Charta, and the Battle of Agincourt, of which there are well-known prints, afford no mean specimens of his strength in history, of his conception of character, and his powers of composition. His mind seemed to partake in a great degree of that Romantic cast of thought so conspicuous in Salvator Rosa. He delighted to represent Banditti under all the circumstances which the mode of life pursued by these picturesque plunderers naturally suggests to a fertile imagination. But though he could exhibit the robber with success, he wanted the powers of Salvator, to place him in an appropriate scene. He was inadequate to express that wild grandeur of solitude, that savage sublimity of nature, where the ferocious and half-armed freebooter appears to be the characteristic inhabitant.

The works of Mortimer in general shew considerable skill in anatomy, and a well-grounded knowledge of the human figure in all its varieties of action and repose. He drew with great facility, particularly with the pen, which he used in a style of uncommon spirit and effect: his sketches with this instrument may be classed among the happiest of his productions. His forms are sometimes incorrect, but seldom vulgar: and though his characters are occasionally overcharged and exaggerated, they rarely fail to be appropriate and expressive. In the other parts of his art the merits of Mortimer are not

Remorseful owns her blindness, and to fame
 Consigns with sorrow his illustrious name.

equally conspicuous. His finished works retain but little of that vigour and spirit of execution which characterize his sketches. His oil pencil is tame and laboured; his colouring betrays no great sensibility to the beauties of tone; and his effects, little scientific arrangement of light and shade. On the whole, however, his powers appear to have been of a superior class; and such as, under better regulation, might have raised him to the highest rank of competition. His productions were few and irregular; they were flashes of intellect, which, while they dazzled by their own light, strongly impressed us with the brilliancy of that fire from which they proceeded.

Line 116. *Relenting Fortune weeps o'er Wilson's fate.*—The name of this extraordinary man is a reproach to the age in which he lived: the most accomplished landscape-painter this country ever produced; uniting the composition of Claude with the execution of Poussin; avoiding the minuteness of the one, and rivalling the spirit of the other. With powers which ought to have raised him to the highest fame, and recommended him to the most prosperous fortune, Wilson was suffered to live embarrassed, and to die poor*. Conscious of his claims, however, he bore the neglect he experienced with firmness and dignity; and though he had the mortification to see very infe-

* So much did the "res angustæ domi" oppress the latter years of poor Wilson, that the place of librarian to the Royal Academy, the whole emolument of which amounts but to fifty pounds per year, was conferred upon him to enable him to eke out a mere subsistence!!!

Hogarth! with thee! satiric Humour fled,
 Proclaims our graphic moralist is dead : 120

rior talents preferred in the estimation of the public, yet, he was never seduced to depart from his own style of painting, or to adopt the more fashionable and imposing qualities of art which his superior judgment taught him to condemn, and which the example of his works ought to have exposed and suppressed. But the merits of Wilson are now found out, though unhappily too late for him to benefit by the discovery ; and the authentic productions of his hand are purchased at all fashionable sales, with an avidity that procures for the picture-dealer the affluence which was denied to the painter. How often has the liberal mind occasion to lament that perverseness of taste, which refuses to be pleased with the efforts of genius while the pleasure can be reciprocal! which affects apathy and indifference to all living merit, and disdains to bestow either praise or profit, till the one can be no longer heard, and the other no longer useful. “*Cineri gloria sera venit.*”—*Martial*.

Line 119. *Hogarth, with thee! &c.*]—Hogarth has conferred that kind of obligation upon his country, which peculiarly entitles him to her regard and gratitude. Civilized nations have ever eagerly contended for the honour of originality in arts and sciences; and have considered as their most conspicuous ornaments, those extraordinary characters, who, starting from the common herd of mankind, seem born to explore new regions, and discover new springs of instruction and amusement. Among the few who come under this description, Hogarth has every claim to be numbered: his genius appears to be as

Who Sampson-like, in conscious might secure,
 Burst the strong bonds that meaner minds endure ;

peculiarly original, his fire to be as much kindled from within, as that of any other painter, of any other age or nation. From his outset he disdained to travel in the high roads of art, or to avail himself of those directing posts set up by his predecessors: he treads in no man's steps, moves within no prescribed limits, and adopts no established combinations: he has, perhaps, less of common-place than any other artist; less of loose material; less dead matter. His subjects, his arrangement, his characters, his style, his manner, are all his own, derived immediately from Nature; drawn pure from the fountain without passing through those ducts and channels of intermediate communication, which always tinge the stream, and betray the soil through which it flows. His path of art was before him unopened, and it appears to have closed after him. But while his works remain to be consulted, Britain may confidently boast of having produced one of those distinguished spirits, those daring navigators of the intellectual ocean, who launch boldly forth in quest of new discoveries, and bring home unexpected treasures from territories before unknown.

Yet notwithstanding the reputation which Hogarth, during the latter part of his life enjoyed, he had much reason to complain of that coldness and neglect, which so frequently depress the vigour of genius, and disgrace the sensibility of taste. Poets and painters are, generally speaking, estimated with little justice while they live; they may be said to stand in their own light; to intercept, as it were, the eye of the critic, who cannot discover the merits of their works till the authors are

Disdain'd the beaten track, the common crown,
And forc'd an untried passage to renown.

removed from his view. "Le tems," says a French writer of the Lives of the Painters, "qui est l'arbitre de la reputation des artistes, ne peut en augmenter la valeur, qu'après avoir soumis à sa puissance, celui qui en est l'objet: dans la peinture plus qu'en tout autre genre, on est, pendant sa vie, son propre rival."

The Marriage à-la-Mode, that celebrated series of pictures now in the collection of Mr. Angerstein, affords a striking instance of the supercilious indifference with which the connoisseur too often allows himself to regard the happiest productions of his day. Although a work possessing the most valuable qualities of art; as moral in design, as masterly in execution; striking Vice irresistibly in her strong holds of fashionable dissipation, and compressing the experience of a life to a compendium of instructive example, the Marriage à-la-Mode found no purchaser amongst its admirers, and Hogarth was reduced to the mortifying necessity of attempting to procure by a raffle that reward for his labours, which the generosity if not the justice of taste ought to have conferred upon him.

But even this expedient failed of success; the prize was not sufficiently attractive to excite the spirit of adventure, and for a sum too contemptible to be named, a Mr. Lane, whose taste in this instance was amply rewarded by his good fortune, became the proprietor of a work which merits to be considered an ornament to the noblest collection.

Though as the dramatist of art, as a satirist exposing by

To nature true his sportive pencil mov'd, 125
 Taught while it trifled, pleas'd while it reprov'd :
 Struck by the harlot's woes, with shame oppress'd,
 Reviving virtue wins the wanton breast ;
 No more the midnight scene to riot warms,
 The rake reviews his *progress*, and reforms. 130

The cottage group their Gainsborough bemoan,
 And with the Muses' sorrows mix their own :

his pencil the vices of his time, Hogarth may be said to have left behind him no legitimate successor ; yet in the display of broader character and lighter humour, his place has been ably supplied by an artist now living, and it is to be hoped, likely long to remain amongst us. With talents distinguished in the higher sphere of art, Mr. Smirke has on various occasions, displayed such proofs of comic ability as entitle him to the praise of original humour ; and his illustrations of the Arabian Nights Entertainments shew a picturesque fancy, a power of characteristic expression, which rank him among the ablest artists of his age.

Line 131. *The cottage group their Gainsborough bemoan.*—This excellent artist, (whose pastoral subjects, and peculiar representations of rural scenery, raise him to a competition with Murillio and Hobbima,) is said in some of his walks about the neighbourhood of London to have been particularly struck

Sad o'er his grave, regardless of the storm,
 The weeping Woodman bends his toil-worn form;
 His dog half-conscious hears his master mourn, 135
 Looks in his furrow'd face, and whines forlorn.
 There too, Lavinia her swell'd heart relieves
 In grateful tears, and for her patron grieves;
 His model now no more—no more to share
 The picture's triumph, or the painter's care. 140

But lo! where Reynolds lies, without a stone
 To mark his grave, or make his relics known;
 No pomps of death the pious eye engage,
 No trophies testify a grateful age;

with the family of a cottager, from which he was supplied with some of his most picturesque models of children; and to which he, during the remainder of his life, shewed much kindness and protection.

In his *Lavinia*, the *Girl and Pigs*, *Children by a Cottage Fire*, &c. there are characters of affecting simplicity and rural beauty, which nature only could have supplied, and taste and sensibility selected.

Line 134. *The weeping Woodman, &c.*—The picture of the Woodman and his Dog in a Storm, is equally known and admired.

No sculptur'd lays of love memorial flow, 145
 To indicate the hallow'd dust below :
 But he, whose genius rais'd his country's name,
 Refin'd her taste, and led her arts to fame ;
 Whose powers unrivall'd Envy's self disarm'd,
 Whose pen instructed, and whose pencil charm'd ; 150
 He summon'd hence, submits to nature's doom,
 And sleeps unhonour'd in a nameless tomb.
 Yet nobler trophies soothe his hovering shade,
 Than e'er sepulchral pageantry display'd :

Line 154. *Than e'er sepulchral, &c.*]—Surely, no character in society can have stronger claims to all the honours of the sepulchre, than he whose taste has contributed to render them creditable to the present age, and interesting to posterity. While grateful to the valour that defends us, ought we to neglect the virtue that improves, and the genius that exalts us? Can he be more reasonably said to die in the service of his country, who lays down his life in the field, than he who exhausts it in the pursuits of science, or devotes it to the interests of morality? The subalterns in arts, as well as in arms, must doubtless be content to pass away unhonoured and unknown, but the distinguished leaders in each pursuit have equal claims to immortality; and while the soldier, and the sailor, are commemorated with all the zeal of public gratitude, the sage, the bard, and the artist, should not be forgotten.

But it is the pride and boast of genius to confer immortality

Genius, like Egypt's monarchs timely wise, 155
 Constructs his own memorial e'er he dies;
 Leaves his best image in his works enshrin'd,
 And makes a mausoleum of mankind.

Hail, star of art, by whose instinctive ray,
 Our boreal lights were kindled into day; 160
 Reynolds! where'er thy radiant spirit flies,
 By seraphs welcom'd 'midst acclaiming skies;
 Whether by friendship fondly led to rove,
 With Learning's sons, in some elysian grove,
 Where moral Johnson, bright in all her beams, 165
 To list'ning angels treats celestial themes;
 Or join'd by him, the sage whose reverend form
 Was seen amidst the tumult of the storm,

rather than to receive it. Mæonia is known by her poet; Urbino by her painter; and Britain will derive honour and consequence from the name and genius of Reynolds, when many of those to whose deserts she has been more munificent will be remembered only in their monuments.

Line 167. *Or join'd by him, &c.*—Alluding to the intimate friendship which subsisted for many years between Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, and Edmund Burke, the three great

High waving Wisdom's sacred flag unfurl'd,
 In awful warning to a frantic world, 170
 Prophetic Burke! thou share the patriot glow,
 To mark Britannia's bright career below,
 To see her time-built throne unshaken stand,
 And law, and order triumph through the land.
 Whether on Titian's golden pinion borne, 175
 Bath'd in the bloom of heaven's immortal morn,
 Thou sunward take thy sympathetic flight,
 To sport amidst the progeny of light;
 Or rapt to thy lov'd Buonaroti's car,
 'Midst epic glories flaming from afar, 180

luminaries of their age in literature, politics, and art; and to each of whom we may with more than ordinary propriety apply the lines of Virgil:

" Dum juga montis aper, fluvios dum piscis amabit,
 Dumque thymo pascentur apes, dum rore cicadæ
 Semper honos, nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt*."

* The author understands, that, despairing of any national or public tribute to the memory of Reynolds, his relatives have determined to procure the erection of a monument at their own expense.

Mr. Flaxman is said to be the sculptor appointed; and from that able artist something may be expected worthy of his subject, and suitable to his reputation.

Suborns no pedant from the critic throng,
 No mock Mæcenas supplicates in song ;
 From all that meanness courts, that pride reveres,
 She asks no sanction, and no censure fears;
 Or sink, or soar, on her own strength relies, 205
 And scorns the flatterer's passport to the skies.
 But lend a ray of thy peculiar light,
 Guide of her art, and guardian of her flight !
 Through Nature's paths conduct her doubtful way,
 Nor let a thought unworthy stain the lay. 210

Of all th' advent'rous spirits who disdain
 To plod in dull content life's level plain,
 The painter only, with the poet dares
 An equal flight, and combats equal cares ;
 Alike aloft, their arduous progress lies, 215
 O'er shoreless seas, amid unshelter'd skies;
 Where, dread expanse ! fierce driving-tempests blow,
 And only genius shuns the gulf below :
 Where fools half fluttering and half floating still,
 Who flounder on against Apollo's will, 220

Become the general jest, the vulgar game,
And sink at last beneath a weight of shame.

Who boldly then the common track depart,
Toil after fame, and take the paths of art;
Ye finer souls! in Fancy's eye who see 225
Whate'er young hopes, and sanguine hearts decree;
While yet unspell'd, unplighted you remain,
Pause, ere you join the art-enamour'd train;

Line 228. *Pause, ere you join, &c.*]—The choice of a profession is always a subject of serious consideration. To fix on the path in which we are to travel through life, which is to lead us to fame, to fortune, and to happiness, is a decision we are called upon to make at the outset of our career, though demanding a degree of judgment and experience seldom attained before the end of it. The wisdom of our parents may indeed assist us to select one of the many avocations, in which industry, prudence, and plain sense only are required: whether a youth shall be made a farmer or a mechanic, a merchant or a manufacturer, may be easily determined by motives of mere convenience, without any scrupulous investigation of his powers, or attention to his propensities. Common qualities are sufficient for such employments; they may descend, as they do in China, from father to son, through different generations, without any danger to the necessary stock of ability. But with respect to the professions which are connected with genius and

Consult your powers, the fancied passion prove,
 Nor transient liking take, for lasting love; 230

taste, the case is different: in these, interest and inclination rarely coincide; our parents are seldom competent to assist our choice; for, generally speaking, they are either ignorant of the qualities required to excel, or so prejudiced as to suppose we possess them. Left, therefore, to our own guidance, and actuated by what is commonly considered the impulse of nature, we should anxiously endeavour to ascertain the precise direction in which that impulse may most effectually operate; for if we mistake or misapply our powers, the error is irretrievable, and the consequence fatal. Adventurers in poetry and painting are a kind of intellectual desperadoes; they may be said to go on the forlorn hope of life, from which few are found to escape with safety or reputation. How necessary, therefore, to deliberate, before we proceed in so hazardous an expedition! before we embark on a service, in which failure is not only disappointment, but disgrace; at once condemning us to poverty, and exposing us to contempt.

“Of all vain fools with coxcomb talents curs’d,
 Bad poets and bad painters are the worst.”

Yet how shall we distinguish between genius and inclination? With what line shall we sound our capacity, so as to discover the depth of its powers, and find out the proper channel in which they should be directed? Whether we are inspired by genius, or possessed by vanity, is to be ascertained by a long and painful process only, and unhappily the prime of life is lost in the experiment.

The nymph once wedded, you repent too late,
To change your fortune, or to check your fate;

In the arts, the most flattering indications of talent are often found to be fallacious; gleams of ability frequently brighten the first years of study, which afterwards prove to have been false lights, tending only to render the subsequent darkness more conspicuous. There is a kind of superficial ingenuity, well calculated to take the lead in drawing-schools and academies, which, assuming all the airs of genius, often passes for that quality amongst inaccurate observers: but this glittering tinsel kind of talent rarely attains to eminence; it belongs more to the hand than the head, and most commonly ends in a manufacture of mannered insipidity and unfeeling mechanism.

But if it be thus difficult for the student to estimate with accuracy the extent of his abilities for the fine arts, it is doubly incumbent on him, at least to ascertain the strength of his attachment to them; let him beware lest, as the text observes,

“ He transient liking take for lasting love:”

lest his disposition to painting should prove but the fickle avidity of a child, who this moment seizes his plaything with rapture, and the next throws it from him with disgust.

Enthusiasm, though not always a sign of genius, is always essential to excellence; nothing great or elevated in poetry or painting was ever produced without it: it is the only quality which can enable the mind to surmount the obstructions of difficulty, and support the pressure of disappointment. A strong love for the art is always good security for a steady application to it; and without steady unremitting application, the best

When time shall tinge her beauties in your sight,
 And all seem labour which was once delight;
 From hope's fond dreams unwillingly awake, 235
 When slow conviction whispers your mistake;
 Then shall you wish some less advent'rous aim
 Had fix'd you safe below the cares of fame ;

opportunities are lost, and the best abilities unavailing. The young votary of art should, therefore, look into his own mind with attention, and examine its dispositions ; he should contemplate the profession he is about to adopt, not only in its pleasures but in its pains ; in its defeats as well as its successes. Let him reflect, that what has hitherto captivated him, as the amusement of his leisure, must now become the serious occupation of his life, losing (like all serious occupations) much of its agreeable character in the obligation by which he is bound to it : demanding an attention undivided, a patience inexhaustible, and a perseverance steady and energetic, under every change of humours, seasons, and situations. If, on this candid examination, he finds not in his breast a passion for the art that rises superior to remonstrance, that cannot calculate consequences, or compromise with prudence ; if he can balance advantages, if he can doubt or hesitate, let him be assured that his call is not genuine ; let him lay aside his pencil, and forbear to toil in a pursuit for which he wants the most essential qualification : which can tend only to unfit him for common enjoyments, and expose him to all the misery of disappointed hopes and mortified pretensions.

To some obscure mechanic toil had sway'd*,
 Or left you humbly diligent in trade ; 240
 While foil'd ambition weeps his wasted prime,
 And disappointment drags the load of time.
 To gain th' immortal wreath of art requires
 Whate'er of worth, or Muse, or Grace inspires ;
 Whatever man, of heav'n, or earth, obtains, 245
 Through mental toil, or mere mechanic pains ;
 A constant heart, by Nature's charms impress'd,
 An ardour ever burning in the breast ;
 A zeal for truth, a power of thought intense ;
 A fancy, flowering on the stems of sense ; 250
 A mem'ry, as the grave retentive, vast,
 That holds to rise again, th' imprison'd past ;
 A feeling strong, instinctive, active, chaste ;
 The thrilling electricity of taste ;
 That marks the muse on each resplendent part, 255
 The seal of nature, on the acts of art ;

* " Soyez plutot maçon, si c'est votre talent
 Ouvrier estimé dans une art necessaire
 Qu'ecrivain du commun et poëte vulgaire."

An eye, to bards alone and painters given,
 A frenzied orb, reflecting earth and heaven ;
 Commanding all creation at a glance,
 And ranging Possibility's expanse ; 260
 A hand, with more than magic skill endow'd,
 To trace Invention's visions as they crowd ;
 Embody thoughts beyond the poet's skill,
 And pour the eloquence of art at will ;
 'Bove all, a dauntless soul to persevere, 265
 Though mountains rise, though Alps on Alps appear ;
 Though Poverty present her meagre form,
 Though patrons fail, and Fortune frown a storm.

O ! rare assemblage ! rich amount of mind !
 Collective light of intellect refin'd ! 270
 Scarce once an age from Nature's niggard hands
 Bestow'd on man, yet such the muse demands ;
 Such, where'er found, let grateful states hold dear,
 Reward them wisdom, wealth and rank revere.

Line 274. *Reward them wisdom, wealth and rank revere.*—
 Great talents, when directed to improve and adorn society,
 can never be too highly esteemed, nor too conspicuously dis-

Alas! how many cast of meaner mold, 275
 Life's common clods, we every day behold,
 In evil moment to the Muse aspire,
 Degrade the pencil, and abuse the lyre;

tinguished. Men of genius are seldom mercenary: as the qualities which characterize them are above all price, so money alone, however necessary to their wants, can never be considered the adequate reward of their exertions.

They require and deserve a nobler recompense; the homage of wisdom and virtue; the respect of their own times, and the regard of posterity.

There is no other description of subjects, from which a state can derive so much reputation, at so little expence. They are the pillars of its present dignity, and the foundations of its future fame. The acts of heroes live only in the enterprizes of mind, and Cæsar's pen has done more to immortalize him than his sword.

Men of genius are luminous points on the great disk of society, which shine even after the sun of power and prosperity has withdrawn its beams, and rescue the nations they adorn, from total darkness in the long eclipse of time.

Commerce may make a people rich, and power may render them formidable: in the one case, they excite envy without admiration, in the other, fear without respect. But exploits of intellect only, can secure that genuine estimation, that grateful homage of the heart, which it is almost as honourable to pay as to receive. The powers of genius consecrate the claims of greatness, invest wealth with dignity, and add veneration to submission.

Persisting toil, by no one talent grac'd,
 And rot like fungi on the field of Taste. 280
 What plumeless bards as poetasters pine !
 What dolts in atrophy of art decline !
 Provoke the fate that humbler fools escape,
 And crawl contemn'd in every graphic shape* !
 But chief, all you whom vulgar thirst of gain 285
 Degrading sways, the graphic fount refrain ;
 Th' insulted spring dries up as Avarice sips,
 Or turns to poison on his tainted lips ;
 Each muse, the mercenary suitor spurns,
 Nor fires the breast, but where ambition burns. 290
 Ye venal herd ! to Plutus' fane repair,
 And breathe your souls in sordid incense there ;

* The former editions of this work contained some lines in this place, which, the author understands, were thought to convey a contemptuous observation on a class of artists, whose claims to public estimation he is by no means inclined either to deny or depreciate. He does not hesitate, therefore, to omit the expressions alluded to; for, however he may consider the objections to them unfounded, he cannot for a moment (were the passage much more important) put it in competition with the feelings of any respectable member of his profession.

Pay court to power, or sooth inflated pride,
 And fortune bears you buoyant on her tide:
 But search of wealth is here a vain pursuit, 295
 The groves of taste produce no golden fruit;
 They sprout in palms alone, or bloom in bays,
 O'erpaid the culture, when the crop is praise.

Nor yet too sanguine, fondly deem that fame
 Awaits to crown your triumphs, and proclaim; 300
 That honour still on excellence attends,
 And praise in clouds at Merit's shrine ascends:
 Foes pleas'd to crush coëval worth combine,
 And censure circulates, the critic's coin;
 The modern's claim, fastidious taste denies, 305
 Or, while he lives, reluctant grants the prize*.
 Fame lurks behind, till Merit's death delay'd,
 And having lost the substance—crowns the shade.

* Thus, Martial:

"Miraris veteres, Vacerra solos
 Nec laudes nisi *mortuos poëtas*."

What time on Arno's silver tide enthron'd,
 Her sceptred sway exulting Commerce own'd; 310
 Exhausted climes to grace her fav'rite's seat *,
 And pour'd the wealth of empires at his feet:
 When, phoenix-like, (triumphant o'er their foes,)
 The arts from their own mould'ring ruins rose,
 Reviving Science felt Protection's hand, 315
 And Leo finish'd, what Lorenzo plann'd;
 Then, due regard the Muses' offspring found †,
 Then, public wreaths exalted Genius crown'd:
 Sagacious power his path with roses strew'd,
 And praise, and honour, all his steps pursu'd; 320
 Their best ambition, and their fairest fame,
 Princes were proud to boast the patron's name;

* Lorenzo de Medici.

† "Tunc par ingenio pretium; tunc utile multis
 Pallere, et vinum toto nescire Decembri."

JUVENAL.

Line 322. *Princes were proud, &c.*—Roscoe, in his justly esteemed *Life of Lorenzo de Medici*, makes the following observation: "In affording protection to the arts of architecture,

Creative art earth's admiration rais'd,
 And grateful nations gloried as they gaz'd.

painting, and sculpture, which then began to revive in Italy; Cosmo set the great example to those, who, by their rank and their riches, could alone afford them effectual aid. The countenance shewn by him to those arts was not of that kind which their professors generally experience from the great; it was not conceded as a bounty, nor received as a favour, but appeared in the friendship and equality that subsisted between the artist and his patron."

In the Inquiry* concerning the real and imaginary Causes which have obstructed the Advancement of the Fine Arts in this country, Barry (among other circumstances, highly favourable to the rise of art in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) has noticed the superior estimation in which artists were then held; and the beneficial effects produced by the taste of those times having kept such even pace with the talents which adorned them, as constantly to supply to the powers of genius the necessary stimulus of admiration.

The disadvantages which attend the modern artist are indeed sufficiently obvious: he is exposed to a contrast of the most invidious kind; he is a pigmy who offers himself to be measured with those whose real grandeur is magnified through the mist of antiquity; whom the tradition of taste has established as giants.

He finds the affections of the connoisseur already pre-occupied, who considers the new claimant on his kindness, as dis-

* The substance quoted from memory.

Lorenzo hail! in whom united blend 325

Thy country's pride, usurper, foe, and friend!

turbing the repose of his judgment; as one whose pretensions are to be examined with rigour, if not repelled with disdain.

In the happier days of art, a very different feeling prevailed towards the artist and his works; a feeling which resulted from the sympathy and correspondence then existing between the refinement of taste and the powers of performance; a feeling which operated at once as an incentive, and a reward; which called forth all the vigour of genius, and was the cause, rather than the consequence, of that excellence which succeeding times have endeavoured to rival in vain. A fastidious age is a frost to the flowers of fancy; they droop and wither in the cold air of criticism. When the sense of natural sweets is superseded by the false relish of affectation, and the man of taste degenerates to an epicure, the terrors of criticism disturb the enthusiasm of genius: the artist becomes more solicitous to avoid defects than to create beauties, and presents himself at the public tribunal with the apprehensions of a culprit for trial, rather than the hopes of a candidate for approbation.

The offspring of Taste are delicate children, that never thrive when they are treated roughly: they require to be attended with care, and caressed with kindness. The man of genius, like the humourist, rarely exhibits his powers with effect, but when he thinks they will be well received.

The connoisseurs of "Leo's golden days" had (comparatively speaking) but little means of displaying their taste, except in the sensibility with which they regarded the talents of their time, and the liberality with which they rewarded

Lo! what new honours crowd around thy name,
 In Roscoe's page recall'd again to fame!

them. The virtuoso, indeed, might have employed his leisure and his wealth in the collection of manuscripts and antiques, medals and coins; but with respect to painting, the connoisseur of the sixteenth century neither possessed nor affected to possess a degree of judgment superior to the merits of his contemporaries, or which might be thought to warrant him in the indulgence of critical disdain, or supercilious indifference. There were then but few tenants in possession on the estate of Taste; few old masters to gratify the splenetic admiration of the "*laudatores temporis acti*;" few old pictures to draw on time for reputation, and no picture-dealers to negotiate the bills. The temple, the palace, and the cabinet were to be adorned by the labours of the living artist; he put forth his powers unchecked by despondency, unchilled by neglect, as secure if he failed of pardon and respect, as of glory and gratitude if he succeeded.

But perhaps it may be said, that the disadvantages above mentioned, as attached to the modern artist, are not peculiar to him; that whatever prejudices prevail to the detriment of living talent, the painter has no more reason to complain of them than the poet, the historian, and others, who are subject to their influence. That the evils resulting from affectation, pedantry, and false taste, are not confined to painting and sculpture, is indeed most true: what Johnson calls "the general conspiracy of human nature against contemporary merit," operates in every department of genius; but the fine arts feel the effects of it at the present moment, with peculiar severity.

Though reason prompts to check th' applausive lay,
That sounds the triumphs of despotic sway, 330

Literature, since the invention of printing, may be said to be in a great measure independent of particular patronage; the press has opened for it a market too extensive to be much affected by critical intolerance, and the public judgment, more matured in books than in pictures, will not now easily submit to be retained in the leading-strings of authority. Though the fastidious arrogance of a few may 'disdain a modern production, for no other reason, than because *it is modern*; yet the suffrages of the many, not to be influenced by such a consideration, will always be obtained by those who possess the powers of amusement or instruction. If an author is read, he may be said to receive half his reward, and the incense of popularity will always revive him, when sinking under the censure of pedantry or prejudice. But the artist of the present day, has no resource against the bigotry of taste: his profit is as much dependant on the connoisseur as his fame; for his market is almost exclusively confined to those, who consider it a proof of superior refinement to condemn what he offers to their acceptance. Amongst the ancients, indeed, literature and the arts, with respect to patronage and encouragement, approached nearer to an equality. Literature was then an expensive luxury, necessarily confined to the few whose wealth enabled them to indulge their curiosity. A collection of books, like a gallery of pictures, was the possession of a prince, the appendage of opulence and splendour. The manuscript of the poet or historian, was to be purchased at a price which few were able, and fewer still would have been wñ-

And sad experience shews in colours clear,
 That, bought with freedom, e'en refinement's dear.
 Their brightest beams while taste and science shed,
 And glow in grateful radiance round thy head,
 The dazzled Muse her Cato's cause resigns, 335
 Nor sees a Cæsar—where Mecænas shines.

But no, though dear, most dear the joys of art,
 The Muse too, shrin'd "within my heart of heart,"
 Though throbbing there, their mingled raptures
 warm,
 My life's employment, and my leisure's charm; 340

ling to pay, if it had been the prevalent practice of criticism to decry the value of the work, or discredit the talents of the author. Now his pictures, and his statues, are (if it may be so expressed) the manuscripts of the modern artist. He cannot dispose of them at a price within the means of the multitude, nor multiply copies by mechanical process; his hopes, therefore, both of fame and fortune, rest entirely on the great and rich, who unfortunately seem at present but little disposed to foster his exertions, and appear to have lost all relish for the fruits of native genius, in an ungenerous, often unjust, and always an unpatriotic preference for the production of other times, and other countries.

My soul's first choice, my fancy's early flame;
 My chance of fortune, and my hopes of fame;
 No, not e'en these should bribe the patriot strain,
 To shed false lustre round ambition's reign;
 Or wreath his brow (howe'er his country grac'd),
 Who sapp'd her freedom, while he sav'd her taste.
 No, not for these, though else denied their charms,
 Shut from the pure elysium of their arms,
 Would I, my country, see in evil hour,
 Thy freeborn sons the sycophants of power; 350
 See the rough virtues of thy clime replac'd
 By smooth servility, with polish'd taste;
 Thy blunt bold spirit, now that fires the brave,
 Sink in the state, and languish in the slave;
 The man unnerv'd—in silken bonds suppress'd, 355
 And life a listless, lacker'd gloom at best.
 Shall it be said? while time attesting shews
 What shining lights despotic skies disclose;
 Shall it be said? where power gigantic awes,
 And rides rude will unbridled through the laws; 360
 Where life hard breathing heaves the general breast,
 In apprehension's asthma sore oppress'd:

Shall it be said? that there the nobler arts,
 That calm our passions and reclaim our hearts,
 Felt, foster'd, lov'd, their highest honours find ; 365
 Ambition's best atonement to mankind !

What though! in Greece, when Ammon's glory
 sway'd,
 When prostrate Rome Augustus' power obey'd,
 In latter days, when Leo's lustre shone,
 And gorgeous Louis grac'd the Gallic throne ; 370
 What though! like rockets from the hand of time,
 Through life's long gloom, shot sparkling and sublime,
 These meteor ages of mankind were given,
 To mark with cluster'd stars the mental heaven,
 And pour their blaze on earth's astonish'd view, 375
 When Freedom's cloud-encompass'd orb withdrew!

Line 376. *When Freedom's cloud-encompass'd orb withdrew!*—
 Voltaire, in his *Age of Louis XIV.* has selected four different periods
 of history, as particularly entitled to be considered the most en-
 lightened ages of the world:—the age of Pericles and Alexander—
 the age of Augustus—the period of the Medicæan ascendancy in
 Italy, or the age of Leo as it is usually called — and “ though
 last, not least in *his* dear love,” the reign of Louis le Grand.

These periods, however distinguished by the splendid achieve-
 ments of the human mind in sciences and arts, appear to have

Britain, for thee! a brighter age expands,
 Bless'd rock, on which the church of Freedom stands!
 From whose pure shrine expell'd with idol power,
 Anarch's grim gods a pagan world devour *, 380

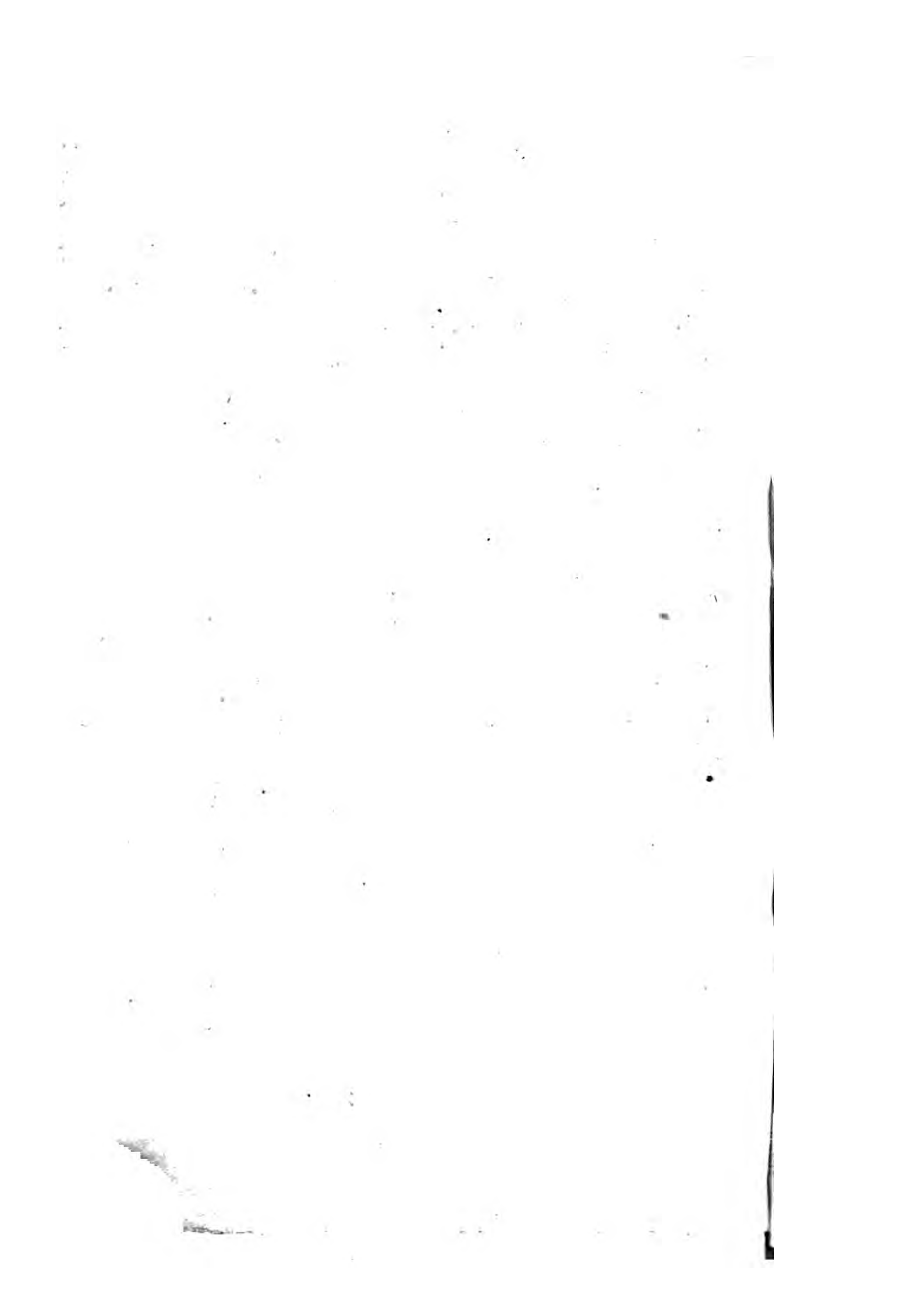
been but little favourable to the interests of human liberty: the influence of Pericles at Athens may be said to have in a great degree undermined that free system, the total subversion of which was effected by Philip and Alexander. The majestic liberties of Rome, so long convulsed in the agonies of dissolution, at last expired without a groan in the arms of Augustus. The liberal and magnificent House of Medici, suppressed by their power the factious and turbulent contentions of the republic of Florence; but her freedom did not long outlive the operation. Louis XIV. made himself despotic in France, and endeavoured to become the tyrant of Europe. He patronized through vanity, and oppressed through pride. He seems to have been less cruel than arrogant, less generous than vain-glorious.

Let us hope, that the fifth great epocha of the civilized world may be derived and denominated from the splendours of British genius; that it is reserved for Great Britain to prove that the purest system of civil freedom, is creative of the noblest powers of intellectual excellence.—Let us hope, that the liberal policy of our princes, and our statesmen, will excite and second the genius of their country; and that we may shortly see the arts and sciences revolving in planetary splendour round the enlivening sun of British liberty; refined to a degree of perfection unattained in former periods; deriving vigour from its heat and lustre from its beams.

* “Thy hand, great *Anarch*, lets the curtain fall.”

Britain, for thee! when calmer hours arrive,
 And our cold year, th' unshelter'd arts survive,
 For thee remains to prove, what radiant fires
 Gild the clear heaven, where liberty inspires;
 To shew what springs of bounty from her hand, 385
 As gush'd the rock at Moses' high command,
 O'er Art's impoverish'd plains refreshing flow,
 And cheer the fainting tribes of Taste below.

While meaner states, like meaner men, endure
 To slumber life in luxury secure, 390
 Sunk in the selfish present; check'd, suppress'd,
 The heav'n-wrought springs of glory in the breast,
 That shoot th' elancing soul through time's career,
 To reach renown, and grasp hereafter here;
 Be thine, Britannia, thine the nobler aim, 395
 To live through long futurity of fame;
 To gain the wreaths that grateful arts bestow,
 Power's proudest immortality below!
 In Time's decay, ere Albion's empire dies,
 To leave her constellation in the skies; 400
 Eclipse the glories of the world combin'd,
 And give a fifth great æra to mankind.



PART THE SECOND.

ARGUMENT.

THE progress of the arts impeded by the disorders of the times—the pursuits of our age also unfavourable to their advancement—the visionary speculations of modern philosophy—the metaphysical chemical, political, and agricultural manias—a general disregard of the Muses, the Graces, and the arts, in pursuit of physical phænomena—the frivolous occupations of science—the rage of experiment operating on all ranks, and disorganizing the laws, morals, and politics of society—the convulsions of Europe occupying the public mind so as to leave no leisure for attention to the children of taste—impediments to the progress of the arts arising also from the prejudices of criticism in favour of antiquity—from the hostility of pretended connoisseurs, the prevalence of picture dealers, and the apathy of those whose taste and influence should correct those evils—the neglect of the state in not holding out incitements to genius regretted—the great influx of pictures from the continent injurious to the exertions of native talents, and tending to engross the means as well as to destroy the spirit of patronage—the affectation of connoisseurship exemplified in the character of Timander—allusion to the few who have distinguished themselves by a friendly interest in the advancement of the arts—the founder of the Shakspeare Gallery—allusion to the late Duke of

Bridgewater's improvements of inland navigation, and the celebrated collection of pictures he formed in the latter part of his life—sketch of a true critic—address to the young painter, not to be discouraged by the obstructions here enumerated—pleasures stated to arise from the practice of his art sufficient to counterbalance its anxieties, by opening the treasures of nature to his view, elevating his mind above gross enjoyments, and furnishing him with a means of rational delight in all situations and circumstances.

RHYMES ON ART;

OR, THE

REMONSTRANCE, &c.

PART II.

*Omnia, si nescis, loca sunt plenissima nugis
Quarum tota cohors, est inimica tibi.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY.

FAR other views our age exclusive claim,
Repress our hopes, and check our flight to fame.
As sickness fouls the palate, and no more
We bear those sweets, the sense enjoy'd before;

Line 1. *Far other views our age exclusive claim.*—Though the wreath of art has for some years bloomed upon the brow of Britain, it must be confessed, that neither the spirit of the

Distemper'd times each finer feeling lose, 5
Disrelish taste, and turn from every muse :

times, nor the liberality of the state, have much contributed to place it there. If she has excelled her neighbours, in every department of painting; in history, portrait, and landscape; if she has displayed a power, a vigour, a spirit, a richness of effect in water-coloured drawings, which rival the productions of the easel, and surpass the efforts of every other age, and nation; to her genius, her unfostered, unsustained, uninigorated genius the praise is due. We have seen no great exertions of power, to stimulate ambition, or to reward desert: there have been no fruits forced in the hot-beds of patronage; individuals have done every thing—the nation, nothing. The plants of Taste have sprung up around us, to a luxuriance sufficient to prove the fertility of the soil, though the care of the gardener has been wanting, and the shelter of the greenhouse unknown. Thus, though the character of the natives of these countries has been rescued from the imputation of dulness, and inability to excel in the pursuits of taste, yet the character of the nation, as far as it is connected with the fine arts, or can be exemplified in the various forms of public patronage and the protection afforded to those who profess them, remains yet to be relieved from an aspersion more mortifying, because better founded.

The Royal Academy (the only* institution for the cultivation

* The Society for the Encouragement of *Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce*, may here occur to the reader: but the plan formed by this very respectable body, is so extensive, and the cultivation of the *fine arts* appears to

And as the passive patient, for his good,
 Will swallow physic, while he nauseates food;
 The feverish state rejects the healthful fare,
 The cordial cup Apollo's sons prepare, 10

of art, of which we can boast) was formed by artists, and though it was fortunate enough to obtain the countenance and high sanction of his Majesty, and to be assisted in its first years by his beneficence; yet, from the nature of its plan, and the necessary limitation of its expenditure, if we except the utility of its exhibitions, already noticed, it affords but slender means of improvement, and no encouragement to rising genius.

This establishment, which ought to be national and comprehensive; which should include within its walls every thing that is essential, expedient, or inviting, to the progress of the student; which should rest on a foundation worthy of the freest, the richest, the most powerful, and the most generous people on earth; and which by foreigners is supposed to be a splendid example of public munificence, derives its income from the disinterested labours of artists; possesses not a single original example of the old masters; and, excepting the advantage of apartments at Somerset Place, has not for many years received the smallest assistance from the state.

With means of support, so inadequate to what ought to be the
 be so inconsiderable, and subordinate a part of it, that the author does not conceive how, in his view of the subject, it can be considered an exception to his observation.

While pill, drop, drug, and potion, all go down,
 As mountebanks discharge them on the town.
 In heat of brain, a rude, eruptive race,
 Break out in blotches on the public face,
 Ferment each acrid humour to offence, 15
 And propagate the leprosy of sense ;
 Till lazar life, unseemly grown and sore,
 Begg for relief again at Giffard's door.

Why, Giffard, why like Dives dost thou hoard
 Those crumbs of wit thou canst so well afford? 20
 Why fly to former ages—foreign climes*?
 Thou Juvenal of more prolific times !
 Beneath thy club though Hydras dire have bled,
 Again, mis-shapen monsters rear the head ;
 Again, th' Antæus folly, from the ground, 25
 Starts into strength, and struts, and swells around ;
 Another labour yet demands thy pen,
 To drag each critic Cacus from his den :

prime object of the institution, the surprise is not, that so little
 has been done, but that so much has been effected.

* Alluding to Mr. Giffard's late translation of Juvenal's Satires.

With generous zeal to Art's assistance haste;
 And free once more the suffering state of Taste. 30
 The blooms of life, the flowers of heaven that blow,
 To deck the soul's dark gloomy grave below;
 That breathe refining fragrance through the air,
 And purify this atmosphere of care ;
 Chill'd by the blast, fall wither'd in our walk, 35
 Or droop the head, and die upon the stalk.

Line 29. *With generous zeal to Art's assistance haste ;*]—Could the author of the *Baviad* condescend to follow in the track of another bard, what a subject for his muse would the Pursuits of Taste afford! — what a rich field for the exercise of his powers!

“ Nor shoots up folly to a nobler bloom,
 “ In her own native soil—the drawing-room.”

YOUNG.

Compared to this prolific theme, the Pursuits of Literature are but a dry and barren topic.

Were Mr. Gifford inclined to canter his satirical Pegasus over the course of Criticism, and sport a little with the follies of *Virtù*, he can be at no loss for the necessary technical knowledge,—he has a friend well qualified to place the subject in a picturesque point of view—

Hoppner would aid the Muse with hand and heart,
 And bring in bold alliance, wit, and art.

The fence neglected, lays the garden bare,
 For all life's ruder herds to revel there,
 With horn and hoof who ravage root and spoil,
 Browse every sweet, and batten on the soil. 40

Ungrac'd, ungracious, dull, demure, and vain,
 A cav'ling, cold, pert, disputatious train;
 The nation's obloquy, the time's offence,
 Infest philosophy, and torture sense;
 Pervert all truth, proscribe each finer art; 45
 Fire the weak head, and freeze the feeling heart;
 Adrift in Passion's tempest turn the mind,
 And cut the moral cables of mankind.
 In patchwork of exploded follies wrought,
 Close quilted in good housewifery of thought, 50
 Their heads with straws from Rousseau's stubble
 crown'd,

Our metaphysic madmen rave around:
 With kings and priests, they wage eternal war,
 And laws, as life's strait waistcoats they abhor,
 As crafty means to check the mind's career, 55
 And put inspir'd philosophers in fear;

To cramp the energies of soul and sense,
And constitute enjoyment an offence.

Line 58. *And constitute enjoyment an offence.*—If history did not sufficiently prove, that nations, like individuals, have their periods of weakness and their paroxysms of frenzy, it would be matter of wonder that the opinions here alluded to should have made such a progress in society, in opposition to the strongest current of experience, and the clearest deductions of common sense. The ingenious speculations of men whose minds are wound up to an Utopian enthusiasm; who seek in human nature for something which the sifting scrutiny of ages has not been able to find in it; and fondly expect from the future, results materially different from the past, might indeed be considered amusing subjects of discussion, if they were not dangerous causes of discontent.

But it can never be safe to trifle with doctrines, which inculcate contempt for the gathered wisdom of ages; which unsettle the established relations of right and wrong, and seduce us from the just estimation of our present state, by visions of impracticable good, and unattainable perfection.

The author's quarrel with them, however, in this place, arises on other grounds—from the conviction, that they tend not only to disorganize, but to vulgarize society, and despoil it of all those graces, and refinements, that have grown out of the order of things which they are professedly directed to amend. Of this, it is no bad illustration, that amongst many disciples of what has been emphatically termed *the new school*, it became a frequent subject of doubt and discussion—whether mankind

What food for ridicule! what room for wrath!
 When study works up folly to a froth! 60

had derived most good or evil from the introduction of the fine arts!!! Indeed, it is impossible to say, to what excess such extravagant notions might not have proceeded, if the good sense of the time had not stepped forward to expose them. We were in some danger of seeing the whims of Cornelius Agrippa* revived with more seriousness, and less learning; of witnessing new declamations on the vanity of arts and sciences, issuing from the prurient brain of disordered speculation, and denouncing those ornaments of life at the bar of political regeneration, as the pestilent promoters of inequality, and the corrupters of all civic virtue.

But even if it should be allowed (and it is certainly highly probable) that the founders of the new philosophy could never have had it in contemplation to pluck up, and eradicate as pernicious luxuries, those tender plants of civil culture; yet surely, that result could scarcely fail to follow from the general adoption of the principles they avow. Though the author does not consider himself very well qualified to analyze the materials of human society, or to discriminate nicely, between causes and concomitants, in the confused and puzzling progress of moral and political operations, yet he thinks he can see all the finer arts and ornaments of life, all the delicate

* Cornelius Agrippa, a learned philosopher and reputed magician of Belgia, who flourished in the sixteenth century, and amongst other extraordinary and ingenious productions, published a treatise on the vanity of the arts and sciences; ascribing them to the agency of the devil, for the corruption of man,

When dulness bubbling o'er ambition's fire,
In cloud, and smoke, and vapour will aspire;

flowers of taste and genius blooming on the very stems of the garden, to the roots of which the axe of modern amelioration seems most particularly directed. From the innumerable complications of civil interest and social dependence; from the influence of wealth and luxury, in their most unrestrained and extended operations; from the inequalities of fortune, rank, and degree, holding out object to ambition, and impulse to labour; spurring the poor by necessity, the rich by distinction; offering ease to diligence, and leisure to curiosity; and furnishing every individual with his appropriate motive of exertion in the general struggle, may be traced to arise, whatever softens, refines, elevates, adorns, and dignifies the character of human nature. From the grand collision of mind operating, and operated on, in this unremitting contest of rival hopes, pretensions, and powers, are struck out those brilliant sparks of civilization, those electric lights of arts and sciences, which irradiate the otherwise sombre scene of our existence, and shine the beneficent planets of the social firmament.

To simplify society, therefore, (as far as that expression means, to check the progress of wealth, luxury, and inequality,) would be (in the author's opinion) to do it a very great injury: it would be to take a direction the very reverse of that in which cultivation has travelled, since first the simple shelter of the forest and the cave, was forsaken for the less equalized accommodations of the cottage and the town.

Wherever society is most refined, there also, its forms ap-

Through each foul funnel of the press will rise,
And fill with fog the intellectual skies!

pear the most complicated. Society is a grand machine, all the parts of which depend on each other in such delicate and intricate connexion, and are so nicely adjusted by the cautious hands of time and experience, that it seems no easy matter for the most expert political mechanic, to ascertain exactly, what pin or wheel can be pulled out, or removed, without danger to its most ingenious and essential movements. Interest, self-interest, is the firm supporting pivot on which the whole enginery rests and turns; want, passion, ambition, are the main-springs of its operation; wealth, power, pleasure, glory, luxury, the principal wheels, which, communicating motion to all the dependent arrangements of minuter mechanism, at length set forward the golden hands of genius and taste to move on the dial of existence, and point to the brightest periods of time, and the most memorable epochas of man.

But these, as Mr. Burke says, "are high matters" not to be dispatched in a note, or touched by a *rhymist on art*; the author, therefore, had better check his presumptuous pen, lest the reader should suspect that he intended to set himself forward as a philosopher. Luckily there is now but little to be apprehended from the ameliorating mania he has noticed; the new lights of civilization are nearly burned down, at least in this country; but while a spark remains in the socket, the extinguishers of reason and ridicule should be applied, for we may be offended by the snuff, after we have blown out the candle.

Caught by the chemic mania raging round, 65
 The votaries of the crucible abound;
 The moles of Science! who her soil explore,
 And buried deep in matter's darkness pore;
 Who, cold to wit and beauty, bend their cares,
 To earths and acids, alkalis and airs; 70
 Slight e'en the sage endow'd with skill refin'd,
 To mark the whole phenomena of mind;
 With nobler zeal develope virtue's plan,
 And analyze the properties of man.

But chief their toils with zest peculiar charm, 75
 Who teach to feed the flock, and till the farm;
 Who still in view man's lofty function keep,
 To fatten calves, and mend the breed of sheep:
 A rough-shod race; who Fancy's flowrets scorn,
 And trample down as tares among the corn; 80
 The Muses' hill reclaim as common waste,
 Parnassus plough, and rake the field of Taste.

What bliss to live? if life's best hopes decay,
 And thoughtless folly fling each flower away;

If low-born toils usurp the public hive, 85
 And from the *utile*, the *dulce* drive ;
 If partial zeal, perverting Reason's plan,
 Regard the animal, and not the man ;
 Provide with provender the stalls of sense,
 And pamper appetite at wit's expense? 90

A morbid pride, a torpor has surpris'd
 Taste's leading nerve, and life is paralyz'd ;
 The blood still circulates, though feeling's dead,
 The body fattens, but the mind is fled.

Line 94. *The body fattens, but the mind is fled.*]—Gibbon remarks, in his *Essai sur l'Etude de la Literature*, "That all ages and countries have seen some particular sciences made the subject of an unjust preference, to the irrational neglect and exclusion of the rest." The observation seems to apply to the present period with peculiar force; physics, politics, and rural economy bear down all competitors for public notice and protection. If you cannot explain, or describe some new chemical phenomenon, construct an ingenious system of civil polity, or discuss with learned prolixity the merits of the drill, the hoe, and the oil-cake, your productions are of little importance, and can expect but little attention. The press groans with agricultural reports, statistical surveys, and chemical controversies; "*system on system in confusion hurled,*"

Each nobler aim that bids ambition rise, 95
 And wings the soul of genius for the skies,

shake to their foundations the established principles of past times, and loosen the concerns of society, to toss and fluctuate in the troubled sea of experiment and speculation. Much credit is certainly due to that investigating spirit which has for its object the amelioration and accommodation of man; which penetrates the inmost recesses of the state edifice; detects the injuries of time and storm; and roots out lurking abuses from the neglected nooks, and cobwebbed corners of society. But still, we should not suffer an inconsiderate zeal to mar its own projects; "*est modus in rebus*;" we should reflect, that the operations of altering and refitting, in the political as well as in the domestic establishment, are attended with great confusion, exposure, and inconvenience to regular habits and sober inhabitants; that without the judgment of the skilful surveyor, we are in danger of mistaking the settlements of time, which confirm security, for the symptoms of decay, which demand repair; and may be led by capricious ignorance, or unfounded fears, to disturb and dilapidate, where we intended to arrange and improve. We should also consider, in the fervour of our devotion to favourite pursuits, that experiments may be multiplied till the principles to be deduced from them are forgotten; that our kitchens may be converted into laboratories without improving our cooks; and even, that oxen may be fattened—to disease.

The more elegant, the more refined, and surely in an enlightened view, not the least useful pursuits of life, experience in the present day but little kindness; they are out of the pale

Pursuits, which on the vulgar world look down,
 And lead to life immortal in renown ;
 Neglected, slighted, rue the tasteless hour,
 When every Muse laments her lessening power; 100
 When dull projectors crowd from every clime,
 To prey upon the follies of the time ;
 Their crafty schemes of low ambition lay,
 And sweep the meed of wit and worth away.

Philosophy, no more content to dwell, 105
 With hermit study whispering in his cell ;

of public solicitude, unnoticed in the press of bolder claimants. We hear of no institutions* formed to protect and encourage them; of no prizes granted to the *caterers* of mind, to the *prime feeders* of intellect, to the *best cultivators* of taste and refinement: the growth of genius is neglected for the propagation of monsters; and again the *fatted calf* has become the most acceptable offering at the shrine of power and patronage. "Pinguë pecus domino facias†" is the universal prayer, but the "et cætera præter ingenium," is forgotten.

* This remark is now no longer just: the public has heard of an institution established for the express purpose above mentioned; an institution which, while it removes from the present age the reproach of apathy and indifference to the fine arts, will, it is to be hoped, rescue the interests of taste from neglect and degradation.

† Horace.

Forsakes in speculative pride the sage,
 And walks the wildest maniac of the age:
 Spell'd by her eye where'er the spectre strays,
 Insurgent shouts the maddening rabble raise ; 110
 Life raves around through each infected brain,
 Confusion reigns, and chaos comes again.
 Science, that erst on eagle pinion soar'd,
 Where wisdom wonder'd, and where faith ador'd ;
 To regions, whence eternal truths diffus'd, 115
 Enlighten'd man, and bless'd a world abus'd ;
 Now with clipp'd wing, familiar flirts away
 In Fashion's cage, the parrot of the day ;
 The sibyl of a shrine where fops adore,
 The oracle of culinary lore. 120

On every side th' insatiate passion spreads,
 Subdues all hearts, and occupies all heads ;
 Rank, sex, and age possess'd beyond belief,
 To physics fly, and *Fuscus* for relief,
 Who, like a nursing mother at command, 125
 With soup, and science, suckles all the land.

Lo! e'en the fair with learned fury fraught!
 On beauty's brow affect the frown of thought,
 To studious seeming discipline their face,
 And wear the mask of meaning in grimace. 13
 Clorinda with electric ardour glows,
 And frights with full-charg'd battery her beaux;
 The common conquests of her eyes disdains,
 And holds her slaves in scientific chains.
 Each weeping Grace her shrine deserted views, 135
 And calls for vengeance, on th' indignant Muse;
 While Cupid trembling, flies th' infected ground,
 Scar'd at the philosophic scowl around.

Line 138. *Scar'd at the philosophic scowl around.*]—The reader will readily believe, the author cannot mean to cast a reflection on the serious pursuits of science in general, or the regular cultivation of Chemistry in particular, from which so much unequivocal advantage has resulted in almost every department of life. The labours of a Fourcroy, a Kirwan, and a Davy, must always attract our regard and gratitude; and he should regret to find himself for a moment suspected of designing to depreciate their value, or diminish their just influence. "*Ludimus innocui.*" He has the highest respect for the physical sciences, but he thinks they have at present more than their

Nor yet in private life alone display'd,
 A solemn farce in Fashion's masquerade ; 140
 To higher spheres th' ambitious rage resorts,
 Pollutes e'en politics, and catches courts :

share in the partition of public favour; that they engross too much of the little disposable attention the requisitions of politics and war have left us to bestow. He would only rally that exclusive preference of inanimate, to animate; of matter, to mind; of earth, to heaven, which exists to the utter neglect of objects more elevated, more in need of protection, and not less important in every liberal view of morals, of manners, and of national estimation. He would in particular, venture to call in question the advantages to be derived from that rage for *scientific amusement*, which has for some time operated on all ranks and degrees. He would ask, what is expected from this *new union* of fashion and philosophy, this alliance of antipathies, this treaty offensive and defensive between natural enemies? "A little learning is a dangerous thing." It seems to be the peculiar danger of the age we live in—the distemper of the times, which taints the whole mass of mind, and converts society into a general hospital of disordered wits and disabled faculties. It is safer not to see at all, than to see only to be deceived; as in dense fogs the blind are found to be the best guides. In the darkness of ignorance we are humble and cautious; we feel our way step by step, and make use of old marks and established conductors to assist our progress; but in the glimmerings of superficial knowledge we rush on our danger, because we presume on our light; we dash against difficulties unseen or misconceived; we mistake forms for things, and shades for sub-

Professors there in pride of power elate,
 Would try experiments on every state,
 Reorganize the globe on *Reason's* plan, 145
 New-temper Nature, and new-model man.

stances; and are either terrified to inaction by false fears and erroneous appearances, or stimulated to rashness in the confidence of imaginary safety.

What beneficial effects can result from this superficial smattering of science at present so prevalent? this duck and drake dip in the profound of physical erudition, which seems calculated only to divest ignorance of her diffidence, without removing her defects; which flatters folly and frivolity with the semblance of skill; and heightens affectation by tricking her out in all the airs of philosophy? Though the author is far from being one of those who would restrict the studies of the fair to the mere economy of the household, the productions of the tambour-frame, or the precept's of Glasse's Cookery; yet he confesses he has no relish for science in coteries, and professors in petticoats. He thinks the new chemical nomenclature makes an awkward addition to the vocabulary of the loves and graces. The very sounds of oxygene, and hydrogene, and caloric, and carbonic, proceeding from the delicate lips of beauty herself, operate like a chill on the heart, and a check to the ardour of admiration. It is to be feared also, that as yet there are no very convincing examples to prove, that the fair derive much improvement in person, manners, or mind, as women, as wives, or as mothers, from dabbling in the crucible with the chemist, or charging a battery with the electrician. The author acknowledges, that he is jealous of those favoured rivals, whom he thinks neither

No more her ancient settled system priz'd,
 Lo! Europe, like a compound analyz'd!
 Her laws, modes, morals melted down, to try
 What forms the fighting elements supply; 150
 What shapes of social order rise refin'd,
 From Speculation's crucible combin'd;
 While cool state chymists watch the boiling brim,
 And life's low dregs upon the surface swim.
 What! though 'midst Passion's fiery tumults toss'd,
 A generation's in the process lost, 156
 Regardless of his raw material, man,
 The calm philosopher pursues his plan;
 Looks on the ruin of a race with scorn,
 And works the weal of ages yet unborn. 160

sufficiently sensible of their charms, nor grateful for their attentions; he has so much regard for the gentler sex, that he would spare them the pain of traversing the dry and thorny wilds of science; and seduce their graceful steps through flowery paths to the more congenial regions of taste, and the more amusing bowers of fancy.

But the accomplished belle of the present day, slights the muses and graces for the more alluring charms of physical phenomena; she performs with a grave face the farce of philosophical experiment, and terrifies her unscientific papa, by mimic thunders, electric shocks, and artificial earthquakes.

Caught by the desolating blasts that sweep,
 With sable pinions o'er the social deep,
 Life's gentler joys, that spread their silken sails,
 In calmer seas, and summer-breathing gales,
 Disaster'd wander o'er the waste that roars 165
 In threat'ning tumult round Refinement's shores.
 The public mind with pond'rous cares oppress'd,
 While Europe's dangers throb in every breast,
 Can scarce a thought on humbler claimants waste,
 The drooping sons of genius and of taste. 170
 Stunn'd by the crash of empires falling round,
 The deafen'd sense admits no softer sound ;
 Each Muse desponding strikes her lyre in vain,
 She finds no ear at leisure for the strain ;
 Arts toiling sons their slighted stores unfold, 175
 Each eye is vacant, and each heart is cold.

Line 176. *Each eye is vacant, and each heart is cold.*]— Not only have our native arts to combat this general indifference to their interests, and the preference of the public attention, which inferior pursuits have so unaccountably obtained, but even circumstances which might naturally be supposed to assist their progress, are deprived of all beneficial influence, and converted into a means of depressing their exertions.

Nor harder fate neglected Art attends
From open foes, than false affected friends;

Thus, the influx of foreign art, which the convulsions of the continent have occasioned here, were it the means of establishing accessible public or private collections, might, by contributing to his improvement, afford the painter some consolation for the diminution of his profits; but, unfortunately, from the spirit of reserve and seclusion which pervades all our establishments, public and private, this immense mass of ancient art at present operates only to engross that wealth and attention, some portion of which would, under other circumstances, be directed to stimulate and reward the exertions of British genius.

In this country, indeed, more than any other that pretends to the cultivation of the fine arts, public collections of the works of taste are wanting to facilitate the studies of the painter. The many fine pictures we possess, are dispersed in the cabinets of private individuals, who, for the most part, are little disposed to communicate beyond their own circles the advantages to be derived from contemplating their beauties. In many cases, they are wholly removed from the examination of the student; and almost in every case where the opportunity of viewing them for the purpose of improvement can be procured at all, it is attended with so many forms and difficulties, that he must have more zeal than spirit who would not rather forego the privilege in disgust, than encounter the obstructions which stand in the way of its attainment.

It is not in the cursory and confused view of fine art,

Ungenerous guardians, who their trust betray,
 And squander her inheritance away ; 180

occasionally caught at sales and auction-rooms, and still less, in that tantalizing glimpse, *en passant*, allowed by the Ciceroni, who conduct the gazing groups of periodical visitors in procession through our celebrated collections, that the young painter can obtain from the works of the great masters that improvement which they are so well calculated to afford. To study a picture with advantage, we must see it at our ease ; there must be leisure for observation, and tranquillity for thought ; in the eagerness of hurried examination the mind is confused, one impression is obliterated by another, till all our remarks are jumbled together in a chaos of imperfect recollections, which neither satisfy curiosity nor improve taste.

A few fine examples of the different schools, collected with judgment, and placed within the reach of the student, either to copy or contemplate at leisure, is a desideratum of the highest consequence to the advancement of British art, and an object certainly not unworthy the interference of the government to effect. Without attempting to rival the treasures of the Louvre, by imitating either the plunder by which they have been amassed, or the parade with which they have been produced to public inspection, it would be a graceful act in those who superintend the interests of the state, to assist in establishing a national depot of art, which might supply to native genius the advantages of foreign travel, and secure to us the superiority which our unassisted efforts have so honourably obtained. There is more real knowledge, more solid instruction to be derived from the study of one fine work of art, than can be

Fame's elder sons with fruitless love embrace,
 But look repulsive on the rising race.
 To her first ages partial, critics find,
 That Nature all her stores of wit assign'd,

supplied by all the powers of precept, or the laboured refinements of criticism.

The late excellent President of the Royal Academy (Sir Joshua Reynolds) lost a noble opportunity of setting an example of public spirit and munificence, which might have been attended with the best effects, and would have entitled him to be considered the benefactor of his profession by his generosity, as well as by his genius. If, instead of leaving several excellent pictures from his collection to enrich the cabinets of his noble friends, which probably stood but little in need of the addition, he had selected a successful specimen of his own powers, with two or three good examples of the old masters, and bequeathed them to the Royal Academy, expressly to operate as the germ of a future collection, they would have formed a nucleus, round which a gallery might have grown by this time, from the liberal contributions of those who would have been induced to follow an example so truly patriotic, and thereby connect their names most honourably with the arts of their country. Had Sir Joshua done this, it had been worthy the greatness of his character, though perhaps, more than either his country or his profession had any right to expect of him. But his memory has sufficient claims to our veneration, although it should be said,

“Hoc defuit unum Fabricio.”

Heirs of her love endow'd above the rest, 185
 By right of primogeniture possess'd:
 But we, dull sons of her exhausted powers,
 Brought forth in Time's degenerating hours,
 Cut off from genius, and curtail'd of sense,
 Are left to prey at large on Providence; 190
 A refuse race, unfinish'd, unrefin'd;
 Drawn from the dregs and sediment of mind.

In better times, ere pride had yet suppress'd
 The generous love of country in the breast;
 Ere philosophic lights had clearly shewn, 195
 'Tis vulgar prejudice prefers our own;
 That pure benevolence impartial glows,
 Alike for Albion's and for Afric's woes;
 High soars on philanthropic flight refin'd,
 In bird's eye view embracing all mankind. 200
 In better times, when better feelings rul'd,
 The patriot kindled, ere the critic cool'd;
 Though candour freely spoke, yet kindness cheer'd,
 And fann'd the embers while a spark appear'd;

In wit, or war, whate'er the field of fame, 205
 Each honest heart upheld his country's claim,
 And deem'd with equal wound the treason harms,
 That stabs her arts, or counteracts her arms.
 But now, those *narrow, local* views unknown,
 We learn to prize all countries—but our own; 210
 Find wit, and art, and taste, and genius given
 To every happy nation under heaven,
 Save just at home!—there Nature's bounty fails,
 And critic pride o'er patriot worth prevails.
 O! dead to shame, to life's best feelings lost! 215
 Whose taste can triumph at his country's cost!

Painting, dejected views a vulgar band,
 From every haunt of dulness in the land,



Line 217. *Painting, dejected views a vulgar band.*]—Though painting is evidently a subject less within the grasp of the unpractised amateur than perhaps any other object of criticism, yet there is no topic upon which the ignorant are less reserved, or the superficial more confident.

The objects of art are supposed to be familiar to every eye. The forms of animals, the effects of light and shade, the varieties of colour, the characteristics of passion, offer themselves

In heathen homage to her shrine repair,
 And immolate all living merit there; 220

on every side to our contemplation; and no man willingly admits, that he is unimpressed by his experience, or that he has cast his eyes around him through life, and yet observed nothing. We find also, that what is supposed to be received from nature, is more a subject of vanity than that which we bestow upon ourselves; we may, perhaps, be content to be thought deficient in those things which depend upon our own exertions, but do not like to be ranked amongst Nature's neglected children, or to be supposed ungraced with those qualities by which she usually distinguishes her favourites. Thus, he whose vanity never affects the praise of learning, does not so easily resign his pretensions to taste; he may admit that he has little wealth of his own acquiring, but he puts in his claim to that which he considers his inheritance. Hence it is, that all descriptions of people would be thought critics in painting, and that the professor encounters in all societies, with those who unceremoniously contend with him in his proper province, and seem as little disposed to respect his judgment as to encourage his skill. Dissent, indeed, may be hazarded with impunity where an *ipse dixit* decides; and there is no great fear of conviction before a tribunal, the competence of which it seems the privilege and boast of criticism to question.

To study an art systematically, to trace it by long and laborious efforts from its rudiments to its refinements, has been generally considered the most effectual means of acquiring not only skill, but judgment; indeed, a plain understanding would

From each cold clime of pride that glimmering lies,
Brain-bound and bleak, 'neath Affectation's skies,

suppose that the former, included the latter; and that the same process which improved the one, must necessarily refine the other. In the pursuits of taste, however, this opinion has been often doubted; and with respect to painting in particular, it is now unreservedly denied. Lookers-on, we are gravely told, know more of the game than those who play it; and, strange to say! the best judges of art are not to be found amongst those who devote to it their lives, but those who bestow upon it their leisure! not amongst those who pursue it as an occupation, but, those who sport with it as an amusement! What the dull artist cannot hope to obtain by years of assiduous application, divided between the study of art and the contemplation of nature, the enlightened critic receives by inspiration, acquires without an effort—by lounging a few idle mornings in an auction-room—poaching in Pliny and Pausanias, for classic scraps, that he may

“ With learning lard the leanness of his sense;”

or by a pop visit to the Louvre and the Vatican.

The moment

“ Some demon whispers—Strephon, have a taste,”

all the mysteries of art are unfolded to his view; he falls in love at first sight with—the old masters :

“ Insanit veteres tabulas Damasippus emendo.”

In critic crowds, new Vandal nations come,
 And worse than Goths—again disfigure Rome ;
 With rebel zeal each graphic realm invade, 225
 And crush their country's arts by foreign aid.
 Dolts, from the ranks of useful service chas'd,
 Pass muster in the lumber troop of Taste ;

He assumes without farther ceremony the character of a connoisseur, and expresses upon all occasions a laudable contempt for the ignorance of the profession.

Were that profound critic, and formidable assailant of the judgment of artists, Mr. Daniel Webb, to indulge the world in the present day with his lucubrations, he would have little reason to observe, "That nothing is a greater hindrance to our advances in art than the *high opinion* we form of the *judgment* of its *professors*, and the proportionable *diffidence* of *our own**" He would be charmed to find how completely this obstruction to the science of connoisseurship is removed; how very little "a diffidence of their own judgment" operates on the *Webbs* of the day. To this happy effect he certainly contributed both by precept and example; he inculcated no respect for the persons or opinions of artists, who, according to his polite and discriminating expression, "seldom like *gentlemen* and *scholars* rise to an unprejudiced and liberal contemplation of true beauty." And in a work, (the best parts of which Winkleman roundly asserts to be taken from a manuscript communicated to him

* Inquiry into the Beauties of Painting, Dial. II.

Soon learn to load with critic shot, and play
 Their pop-guns on the genius of the day. 230

No awkward heir that o'er Campania's plain,
 Has scamper'd like a monkey in his chain;
 No ambush'd ass, that hid in learning's maze,
 Kicks at desert, and crops wit's budding bays;

by Mengs the painter) he with equal modesty and liberality declares, that "a sketch" from his pen, "*rude as it is*, will carry with it more of the true features of the original than any you could collect *from the writings of our painters*, or the authority of our Ciceronis*!!!"

"Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatus?"

Let it be remembered, however, that these sentiments have proceeded from a "*subtilis veterum judex*," who talks of "the splendid *impositions* of Rubens, and the *caricatures* of Michael Angelo†."

* Winkleman, in a letter quoted in the *Memoirs of the Life of Mengs*, says of Webb's book: "Ce qu'il y de meilleur dans ce livre est *tire d'un manuserit* sur la peinture que Mengs communiqua a l'auteur, que j'ai beaucoup connu. Cependant le *Fat* ose avancer, qu'il n'y a point de peintre que soit en etat de faire par lui-meme, les observations qu'il donne tandis que c'est de Mengs qu'il a emprunte ces observations."

† To oppose the annihilating dictum of this *trenchant* critic respecting these two great artists, we have only the *vulgar testimony* and *tasteless admiration* of such men as—*Reynolds* and *Fuzeli*.

No baby gown, that still his coral keeps, 235
 And sucks the thumb of Science till he sleeps;
 No mawkish son of sentiment who strains
 Soft sonnet drops from barley-water brains;
 No pointer of a paragraph, no peer,
 That hangs a picture-pander at his ear; 240
 No smatterer of the ciceroni crew,
 No pauper of the parish of Virtù;
 But starts an Aristarchus on the town,
 To hunt full cry dejected Merit down;
 With sapient shrug assumes the critic's part, 245
 And loud deplores the sad decline of art.

The dunce no common calling will endure,
 May thrive in taste, and ape the connoisseur;
 No duties there, of sense, or science paid,
 Taste's a free port where every fool may trade; 250
 A mart where quacks of every kind resort,
 The bankrupt's refuge, and the blockhead's forte.

Line 252. *The bankrupt's refuge, and the blockhead's forte.*]—
 The real connoisseur is a character almost as rare and estimable, as the affected connoisseur is common and ridiculous; but

E'en they, with learning, spirit, sense endow'd,
Whom real feeling rescues from the crowd ;

as there is no counterfeit of less value than the latter, so there is none more easily detected ; the eye of taste discovers him at the first glance ; and it would be no disadvantage to society, if in all cases the impostor were to be exposed on the spot, as bad coin is sometimes nailed to the counter at which it has been fraudulently uttered. The true connoisseur is a man of sense and sensibility, led by the love of nature to the contemplation of art ; superior to common cant and vulgar prejudice ; his feelings are alive to merit, ancient or modern, living or dead : having formed to himself a standard of reference, the result of attentive observation, accurate comparison, and mature reflection, he can measure merit without consulting the critical scale of reputation ; he can give his opinion of a picture without first inquiring the painter's name ; and has even the courage and the kindness to distinguish contemporary talent though unsanctioned by time or authority. The affected connoisseur, on the other hand, is the dupe of delusion, the creature of caprice ; his code of criticism is a catalogue raisonné ; he talks in technicals like a parrot, and takes a picture-dealer as his oracle of art ; he judges of nature by pictures, and sees the model only in the imitation ; having no criterion of judgment but that which is derived from the "whistling of a name," or the whisperings of an auction-room ; he is unable to discriminate, and blames and praises by the lump ; borne down by the bulk of reputation, he has no test by which to assay its real purity, and separate the metal from the dross ; conscious of his incapacity, he never hazards approbation but on the back of authority, and therefore

The finish'd few, on whom each Muse depends 255
 For candid judges, and for generous friends,
 E'en they unmov'd behold the bower defac'd,
 Nor more delight to raise the plants of Taste.
 O! doubly grac'd to rival worth, and raise,
 Worth "fallen on evil tongues and evil days." 260
 L——, B——, H——, must th' unwilling strain
 Accuse *your* coldness also, and complain?
 Complain that high in Fortune's favour plac'd,
 Fashion's chief umpires in the court of Taste,

sacrifices without mercy or remorse, the claims of his contemporaries to the security of his own judgment, and covers his ignorance, and insensibility of the merits around him, with a cloak of affected and indiscriminate contempt.

But the name of a great master is a passport through all the outposts of criticism; Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Correggio, are sounds with which all the beauties of art are associated. The question is not so much the excellence, as the authenticity of the work; the latter established, the former follows of course, and the contented enthusiast forgets in the fervour of his zeal, that the greatest genius proceeds at first in ignorance, and rises late from mediocrity; forgets, that the accomplished master he admires was once an unskilful scholar; and often bestows on the abortive efforts of his inexperience that applause which should be reserved for the best productions of his maturity.

Aloof in careless apathy you stand, 265
 And leave the arts unshelter'd in the land.

So long our passion, and so late our prize,
 Must hapless Painting fly our faithless skies,
 Shut from our sordid view her opening charms,—
 Lur'd by our vows, yet slighted in our arms. 270
 While each low interest which assumes to aid
 Th' o'erwhelming powers of politics and trade,
 Stirs the whole state to work th' imagin'd weal,
 And shakes the senate with superfluous zeal;
 Will no warm patriot take the Muses' part, 275
 And rouse his country in the cause of art?
 Plead for her present glory—future fame,
 And save the age from everlasting shame?

Line 278. *And save the age from everlasting shame.*—It appears somewhat extraordinary, that among the many liberal and enlightened individuals who adorn the senate of the nation, there should not be found one, desirous of distinguishing himself by an exertion to excite the attention of the state to the neglected interests of the fine arts. And yet, on what subject could zeal be employed more gracefully, or eloquence

Is Taste the only suffering stranger known,
That finds no refuge 'neath Britannia's throne ? 280

plead with more effect ? In what light more favourable could the patriot present himself to the view of his country, than that which exhibits him as the guardian and advocate of those pursuits on which her present splendour and her future estimation so materially depend ? Such a cause is in itself so honourable, that but to appear in it must be reputation, and to fail in it could be no disgrace: but, unhappily, we have no representative of the Muses—no volunteer deputy of the department of Taste.

The fine arts are considered as little better than a sort of vagrants—a kind of wandering gypsies, without home or settlement, who must be content to glean the stubble of society for a precarious subsistence, and to whom even the claim of commonage is allowed as a favour.

Let us hope, however, that the children of Taste, like the children of Israel, will ere long, find an establishment in the Canaan of public munificence ; that some enlightened Moses will arise to lead them to the promised land of patronage and protection: already, a light has dawned which omens well for their deliverance. Surely, while we are expending thousands to preserve, as mere curiosities, the mutilated remains of ancient arts, we shall not see with indifference our own arts falling to decay ; while we generously contribute to enshrine in splendour and magnificence the sacred relics of Egyptian genius, we shall not shut the temple of patronage against the

What hope remains when public spirit fails!
 When power forsakes, and prejudice assails!
 When not e'en praise the churlish time supplies,
 And patronage in picture-dealing dies!
 The tide of fortune in full current view, 285
 Pour'd on each upstart trader in virtù,
 While the skill'd artist finds each prospect fly,
 The stream exhausted, and the fountain dry.

No high excitements from the state address'd,
 Wake slumbering genius in the painter's breast; 290
 To themes divine recall his truant hand,
 And bid proud art her heav'n-ward wing expand.
 No patriot acts adorn our public halls;
 No Gospel glories grace Religion's walls;
 No martial pomps in pictur'd lore allure— 295
 In taste alone is public spirit poor?

living genius of Britain, nor refuse to extend the shelter of the state to those interesting claimants, who repay with such grateful interest whatever favour they experience, as to make protection policy, and stimulate the sensibility of taste by the purest considerations of patriotism.

Art's mild complaint still sleeps in Power's ear,
 And lavish ministers are misers here.

Line 298. *And lavish ministers are misers here.*]— About three years since, at a time when an attempt was made to raise a subscription for the purpose of commemorating, by a naval pillar, the maritime glories of Great Britain, Mr. Opie, an eminent artist well known to the public, pointed out, through the medium of a newspaper, the inadequacy of such a memorial; and suggested a plan more comprehensive in its objects, and calculated, at a comparatively trifling expence, at once to celebrate the heroism, and encourage the genius of the country in a way that would reflect credit on its taste and liberality.

Mr. Opie, supported by the zealous co-operation of Mr. Flaxman and other members, submitted his ideas to the Royal Academy: that body, conceiving the moment propitious for making an exertion in favour of the arts over which they preside, adopted his plan; and, impressed with the danger of total annihilation, to which the failure of all private encouragement had exposed the higher classes of art, presented an address on the subject to their gracious founder and patron, his Majesty.

This application, the author understands, has not hitherto produced any effect. As his Majesty's beneficent disposition to countenance and promote the advancement of every useful undertaking is well known, and as it is not to be expected, that the private purse of the Sovereign should defray the charges of a plan designed for the attainment of objects peculiarly public and national, we must attribute the unfortunate failure

Say, what avails it, from Italia's plains,
 Her ransack'd palaces, and plunder'd fanes, 300
 That fraud or folly draw delusive stores,
 And empty Europe's refuse on our shores?
 That pedigree'd on proud patrician walls,
 In cloister'd cabinets, and costly halls,
 The time-touch'd wonders of meridian taste, 305
 In close-kept solitudes of state are plac'd?

of the Academy's endeavours in this instance, to the coldness and indifference of those to whose management the treasures of the state were intrusted: who perhaps conceived it no part of their duty to attend to such applications, and thought that the public money (even in so small a portion as was required to effect the plan proposed) might be better employed, than in cultivating the flowers of taste, encouraging the productions of art, or stimulating by public honours the achievements of patriotism.

Line 306. *In close-kept solitudes of state are plac'd.*—It would be worthy the liberality and patriotism of some of our distinguished collectors, to set apart one day in the week, during the most convenient season of the year, for the untaxed admission to their galleries of every person with the appearance of a gentleman. The curiosity of taste is neither so strong, nor so generally diffused among the British public, as to render such an arrangement either prejudicial or incommodious. The

Ir cold and careless, to our country's arts
 We shut our eyes, our houses, and our hearts;

mere idle loungeur would soon discontinue his visits in pursuit of novel attraction, while the man of taste, and the artist, would frequently enjoy a pleasure, which their admiration and respect would, to a generous mind, abundantly repay. Or should the domestic habits of society in this country, and the contracted scale of our houses, render a general admission so inconvenient as to infringe on private comfort, still means might be adopted to facilitate the admission of those, whose professional studies make such an advantage of the greatest consequence. The President of the Royal Academy, for instance, might be empowered to grant cards of access on particular days, to those students and artists who might be desirous of such permission, and his character and station would be a sufficient security that the privilege would not be abused. What an advantage to the painter! during the composition of his work, to have the means of occasional, unceremonious intercourse with the old masters; to have opportunities of refining his taste, of kindling his enthusiasm, and elevating his ideas of perfection, in the unembarrassed contemplation of such examples of art as are to be found in the collections of the late Duke of Bridgewater, Lord Carlisle, Mr. Angerstein, Lord Radstock, Mr. William Smith, Mr. Agar, and others.

This privilege of admission, however, if granted at all, should be allowed to be enjoyed in perfect ease and independence. The artist should be left to himself, to his own observations and

With foreign blooms long faded, fill our bowers,
 Yet find no fragrance in our native flowers; 310

reflections. There is no enjoying a picture in peace while the proprietor is expatiating on its beauties. All pleasure is destroyed, all improvement prevented, when

The connoisseur his cabinet displays,
 And levies heavy penalties of praise ;
 Exacts your admiration, without end,
 Watches your eye, nor waits till you commend.

Neither politeness nor prudence will allow you to dissent, however erroneous you may think his remarks, or misplaced his panegyric; for in the present day, when old pictures bear a price so extraordinary, to hint a doubt of the various, and often incompatible merits, which the owner of a celebrated work chooses to ascribe to it, seems not only an insult, but an injury, since it tends to depreciate his property, as well as to disparage his taste. Criticism may roam at large in the library, and discuss without ceremony the merits and defects of the poet, the historian, and the philosopher; but in the cabinet of pictures, her privileges are circumscribed; there "the walls have ears," and no sounds are safe but the echoes of admiration.

In this city alone, there are examples of the old masters of sufficient variety and excellence, to communicate to the student almost as much improvement as perhaps can be obtained outside the walls of the Vatican, were the means of

If that high impulse, which the bounding soul
 Of genius urges to its utmost goal,
 The great refuse, nor grant one favouring smile,
 To gild the hope, or glad the heart of toil.
 Their various uses, meaner toils commend, 315
 And commerce finds in every want a friend ;
 Like plants of bold and vigorous growth, they bear
 Spontaneous fruit, and ask but room and air ;
 But arts, a tribe of sensitives, demand
 A hot-house culture, and a kinder hand ; 320
 A taste to cherish every op'ning charm,
 A shade to shelter, and a sun to warm.

studying the treasures we possess liberally placed within his
 reach, were they not unfortunately too often

With selfish zeal, in pride's recesses plac'd,
 Secluded from the curious eye of taste,
 Till squander'd thousands leave the spendthrift poor,
 And Cōxe, or Christie, break the prison door.

When a celebrated collection is brought to the hammer, it
 affords a transient treat to the connoisseur, and particularly
 to the artist. An auction-room is a privileged place ; a sale
 of pictures is the painter's Saturnalia, when, like the slaves

Few now the gen'rous spirit feel, or feign,
 That prides to call forth genius, and sustain;
 That flies e'en Failure's drooping wing to raise, 325
 To sooth with kindness, and console with praise.

amongst the ancient Romans, he may enjoy full liberty of opinion, and speak his mind freely, even of his masters.

Line 324. *That prides to call forth genius, and sustain.*]—Mr. West, the able artist who fills* the chair of the Royal Academy, in his last discourse, delivered on the anniversary of the establishment of that institution, observed, “that the encouragement extended to the genius of a single living artist in the higher classes of art, though it may produce but one original work, adds more to the celebrity of a people than all the collections of accumulated foreign productions.” This remark, at all times just, seems to apply with particular force to the peculiar taste of the day; never was there a time when picture-dealers occupied so much of the public attention, and painters so little; when there was more disposition to traffic in the arts, and less to cultivate them; when the possession of celebrated pictures was so much contested, and the protection of native genius so little attended to. Works of art are now not so much objects of taste, as articles of trade; and a fashionable gallery, or cabinet, is little more than a warehouse of established reputation, in which goods are exposed to view before they are brought to market. Unluckily, however, the living artist is excluded from all share in the profitable speculations of taste,

* Since the former editions of this work Mr. West has resigned the chair of the Academy.

No learn'd Mecænas fans the Muse's fires * ;
 No Leo lives, no Medici inspires:
 The patron is a name disown'd—disgrac'd ;
 A part exploded from the stage of Taste. 330

for his wares are not in demand: the cast is of no value till the mould is broken: life is an apprenticeship to reputation, which the painter must serve to the last, before his name can be suffered to sound in the firm of virtù, or he can arrive to be made free of the guild.

“ Indignor quidquam reprehendi, non quia crasse
 Compositum, illepideve putetur, sed quia nuper.”

HORACE.

Doubtless, many of those persons, who, at an immense expence, form collections of old pictures, are impressed by the conviction, that while they gratify their own taste, they also enrich their country, and take the most effectual means of assisting the efforts of native talent, by introducing the best examples for study and imitation. But though good examples are highly useful in the education of a painter, they will lose much of their beneficial influence on him, if instead of being offered to his emulation with encouraging kindness, they are held out with invidious comparison to his defects; if they are brought to triumph over him, rather than to assist him; and operate only, to sharpen the asperity of the critic, and intercept the munificence of the patron.

* Quis tibi Mecænas? quis nunc erit aut Proculeius,
 Aut Fabius? quis Cotta iterum? quis Lentulus alter?

While fierce, from every broken craft supplied,
 Pretenders, arm'd in panoply of pride,
 'Gainst modern merit take the field with scorn,
 And bear down all in our dull æra born ;
 With bigot eyes adore, and beating hearts, 335
 The time-worn relics of departed arts ;
 Gem, picture, coin, cameo, statue, bust,
 The furbish'd fragments of defrauded rust,
 All, worship all, with superstitious care,
 But leave the living genius to despair. 340

Dug from the tomb of taste-refining time,
 Each form is exquisite, each block sublime.
 Or good, or bad, disfigur'd, or deprav'd,
 All art, is at its resurrection sav'd ;
 All crown'd with glory in the critic's heav'n, 345
 Each merit magnified, each fault forgiven*.
 Taste views indignant pagan rites restor'd,
 And idol monsters in her shrine ador'd ;

* *Ingeniis non ille favet, plauditque sepultis
 Nostra sed impugnat, nos nostraque lividus odit.*

With holy rage each prostrate pedant spurns,
 And in a Proctor's fate, a Phidias mourns. 350

Seclude me, Heav'n ! from every light of art,
 Cloud every joy that Painting can impart !
 All love of nature, sense of taste confound,
 And wrap me in Cimmerian gloom around ;
 But never more, in mercy, let me view 355
 Timander's pictures—and Timander too.
 'Tis past all human patience to endure,
 At once the cabinet, and connoisseur,
 Behold ! how pleas'd the conscious critic sneers,
 While circling boobies shake their asses ears; 360
 Applaud his folly, and, to feed his pride,
 Bray forth abuse on all the world beside ;
 Hear him, ye gods ! harangue of schools and styles,
 In pilfer'd scraps from Walpole and De Piles !
 Direct the vain spectator's vacant gaze, 365
 Drill his dull sense, and teach him where to praise ;

Line 350. *And in a Proctor's fate a Phidias mourns.*—
 Proctor, a young sculptor of uncommon powers, who, a few
 years ago, died neglected and unknown.

Of every toy, some tale of wonder frame,
 How this from Heav'n, or Ottoboni came :
 How that, long pendant on plebeian wall,
 Or lumber'd in some filthy broker's stall, 370
 Lay, lost to fame, till by his taste restor'd,
 Behold the gem—shrin'd, curtain'd, and ador'd.
 Hear him, ye powers of ridicule ! deplore,
 The arts extinguish'd, and the Muse, no more ;
 With shrug superior now in feeling phrase, 375
 Commiserate the darkness of our days ;

Line 368. *How this from Heav'n, or Ottoboni came.*]—Ottoboni, a celebrated Italian cardinal, collector, and connoisseur: such was the reputation of his taste, that, for many years after his death, no picture was esteemed in the market of virtù, that could not be traced to have been in his collection; or that was not by some ingenious picture-dealing anecdote connected in some way or other with his name. On the dissolution of the Jesuits, a late Doctor, of high renown in the annals of picture-dealing, expressed himself in the following terms, to an eminent artist now living: “ The dissolution of the Jesuits ! heavens, what an occurrence ! what a bait for the connoisseurs ! ! Oh ! that I were young again ! Sir, the only lucky event that happened in my time, was the death of Cardinal Ottoboni, and I ran his name with success against the field for five and-twenty years.”

Now loud against all living merit rage,
And in one sweeping censure—damn the age.

Look round his walls—no modern masters there,
Display the patriot's zeal, or patron's care; 380
His Romish taste a century requires,
To sanctify the merit he admires;
His heart no love of living talent warms,
Painting must wear her antiquated charms,
In clouds of dust and varnish veil her face, 385
And plead her age, as passport to his grace.
To critic worship, time's a sacred claim,
That stocks, with fools, the calendar of fame.

Line 386. *And plead her age, as passport to his grace.*—To prevent idle conjecture, or absurd misapplication, it may not be improper to state, that the character drawn above is not a portrait: on the contrary, every thing has been studiously avoided which could be suspected of an allusion to any particular person. The features, indeed, like those of the celebrated Helen of Zeuxis, are all derived from nature, in various models; but the whole face is ideal, and intended to represent the species, not an individual.

“Hunc servare modum nostri novere libelli;
Parcere personis, dicere de vitiis.” MARTIAL.

Shame on the man, whate'er his rank or state,
 Scorn of the good, and scandal of the great ; 390
 Who callous, cold, with false fastidious eye,
 The talents of his country can decry ;
 Can see unmov'd, her struggling genius rise,
 Repress the flight, and intercept the prize ;
 Profuse of fame to art's past efforts roam, 395
 And leave unhonour'd humble worth at home.
 Nor less in every liberal mind debas'd,
 The servile tribe—the tadpole train of Taste,
 Who crown each block, as Jove in jest decrees,
 And skip, and squat around such fops as these. 400
 Wherever power, or pride, or wealth keep court,
 Behold this fulsome, fawning race resort ;
 A motley group—a party-colour'd pack,
 Of knave and fool—of quidnunc, and of quack,
 Of critic sops insipid, cold and vain, 405
 Done in the drip of some poor painter's brain ;
 Dabblers in science—dealers in virtù,
 And sycophants of every form and hue.
 Low artists too, a busy, babbling fry,
 That frisk and wriggle in a great man's eye, 410

Feed on his smiles, and simp'ring at his side,
 Catch the cold drops that flatt'ry thaws from pride;
 A cunning kind of fetch-and-carry fools,
 The scum of taste, that bubbles up in schools;
 Savealls of art, that shed a glimmering ray, 415
 And burn the snuffs their betters cast away;
 As abject, crouching, void, and vile a train,
 As wit can well deride, or worth disdain.

But turn the verse, my Muse, indignant quit
 These common counterfeits of worth, and wit; 420
 This lacker'd coin of critics, clipp'd, debas'd,
 The dross and residue of sterling taste;
 To hail the few, who friendly shine to cheer
 This graphic gloom, this cold inclement year;
 To greet with glowing heart, and grateful lay, 425
 The Warwicks, Lockes, and Cecils, of the day:

Line 426. *The Warwicks, Lockes, and Cecils, of the day.*—At a time when the antipatriotic affectation of criticism considers it a kind of stigma on the taste of a connoisseur, to shew any favour to living talent; or to employ the pencil of pining genius, except for the preservation of family physiognomy in

The Leicester's too, whose liberal spirit glows
 To pay what patronage to merit owes ;

the subordinate department of portraits, the author is happy to offer the humble homage of his verse, to those who disdain to found their pretensions to taste on a contempt for their contemporaries, and do not forget the claims of the living, in their veneration of the dead. The conspicuous characters named above, have sufficiently evinced their favourable disposition to the merits of the day, to justify their selection on the present occasion ; and it is to be hoped, that the patriotic partiality so honourably displayed, will yet ripen to a strength of patronage and protection, which may rescue the interests of the arts from ruin, and succeed in placing them upon a footing at once liberal, national, and secure.

Lord Warwick, and Mr. Locke, are too well known as the friends of arts and artists, to require any instances of their kindness to be enumerated here.

The Marquis of Exeter (unfortunately deceased since the lines were written in which his name occurs), by affording to the fertile pencil of Mr. Stothard, on his own terms, a liberal opportunity of displaying his powers in his noble residence of Burghley, has set an example to the higher orders of the state, as worthy of record as of imitation.

Among the few individuals of rank and fortune who evince a disposition to cherish the arts of their country, the name of Sir John Leicester should be distinguished with respect: he views with partiality, and collects with pride the flowers of native growth, and the merits of Northcote, Thompson, and Calcott, will justify his taste, while they attest his liberality.

And you, proud Fortune's favourite sons, who guide
 The helm of trade triumphant o'er the tide,
 Ye Angersteins! through whose expansive hearts,
 Britannia's commerce cultivates her arts; 430
 Who, though well stock'd from Time's maturing store,
 Can prize the greener growth of Albion's shore,
 With fostering care the curling tendril twine,
 And hope a vintage from the grateful vine.

Nor, venerable Boydell, thou refuse 435
 This passing tribute from no venal Muse;

Line 435. *Nor, venerable Boydell, &c.*]—The claims of the venerable patriarch of public spirit, Alderman Boydell*, rest upon a different, but not less honourable foundation. Whether we consider the gigantic project of the Shakspeare Gallery, as a vast commercial speculation, combining views of laudable and liberal advantage, with the cultivation and advancement of the arts, from which his profits were to be derived; or whether we look on it, as a plan originating in the patriotic ambition of a man, already by a long course of honourable industry raised above the temptation of interest, and enthusiastically determined to risk the accumulations of his life, in an effort to

* While this work was printing, the worthy Alderman paid the debt of nature. The Shakspeare Gallery did not long survive its founder; and circumstances have attended its dissolution sufficient to discourage in future all similar speculations, and deprive the arts of those resources which the spirit of trade supplied, when the spirit of taste lay torpid, and the spirit of patronage appeared to be extinct.

Who though uncall'd her inexperience'd hand,
 To aid the edifice thy spirit plann'd;
 Yet owns thy worth, asserts thy honest claim,
 And 'mongst the friends of art enrols thy name. 440

Yet while the Muse's ready wreaths extend,
 To crown the few whom candour dare commend,

encourage the depressed genius, and promote the peaceful glories of his country; in either case, whether we view it as arising from the enlightened spirit of trade, or the liberal impulse of patriotism, the Shakspeare Gallery, in its origin and its completion, must be an object of interest to every generous mind, and has claims on our admiration, which neither malignity can misrepresent, nor prejudice deny. Whatever may be the final result of this nobly conceived scheme of national embellishment and splendid poetical illustration; if we reflect on the talents it has called into action, the persevering spirit with which through the most unpropitious period it has been conducted, and the animating impulse it has communicated through all the minor operations of typographic taste, we shall pay our just tribute of applause to the merits of the projector, and hail with respect the name of Boydell, as deserving to be held dear by every friend of art, and to be recorded with honour in the fairest annals of his country.

Line 442. *To crown the few whom candour dare commend.*—
 Though, unhappily, an ambition to encourage and protect the efforts of rising genius, is not the fashion of the day; yet the

Shall Egerton* depart without a tear?
 And press in silent state a plumeless bier?
 No, though his tomb no martial glories grace, 445
 No trophies won in wild Ambition's race;
 Though no vain pen on History's pompous page
 Paint the deep statesman to th' astonish'd age;
 Lay open all the labyrinth of his breast—
 What plans he form'd—what factions he suppress'd;
 What flames of war broke forth as he desir'd—
 Cool'd as he calm'd, or kindled as he fir'd;

author would be sorry either to believe, himself, or to impress upon his reader, that there were not many other individuals, whose zeal and liberality form an honourable exception to the general indifference he deplores. He has heard many persons mentioned with respect, as not only distinguished for taste, but as displaying towards the arts of the day, a cordiality of feeling, which, if not amounting to patronage and protection, at least shews a friendly interest in their reputation, and advancement. In the text, however, he has confined his verse to the few only, of whom such instances of kindness, and encouragement to contemporary talents, have been reported to him, as warrant his paying homage under their names, to all those whose liberal qualities in this respect, may, perhaps, be deserving of more particular, as well as more eloquent commendation.

* The late Duke of Bridgewater.

Yet life's mild arts their spotless ensigns wave,
 And grateful swains strow garlands on his grave.
 Though crown'd with all in rank or wealth that
 charms, 455
 And lulls th' enfeebled soul in Pleasure's arms,
 Behold him, yet in man's meridian hour,
 Fly the false glare of pomp, and pride, and pow'r ;

Line 453. *Yet life's mild arts their spotless ensigns wave.*—
 To the spirit and example of the late Duke of Bridgewater,
 may in a great measure be attributed the important advan-
 tages we derive from the extension of our inland navigation.
 With a zeal and perseverance more than meritorious in persons
 of his exalted rank, he prosecuted his canal speculations until
 their success repaid his exertions with interest, and roused the
 spirit of enterprise and emulation in every part of the country.

The principal amusement of his leisure in the latter years
 of his life, was the formation of a collection of pictures, which,
 in merit, if not in number, may perhaps proudly vie with any
 private gallery in Europe. But though possessed of the finest
 examples of the old masters, he was not one of those affected
 admirers of art, who regard the productions of their own time
 with indifference or contempt; nor did he conceive it an im-
 peachment of his taste, to place as an ornament in his collec-
 tion, a work of ability from the pencil of a living artist (Mr.
 Turner), though selected at a price, which even the merit of
 Wilson could never extort from the parsimonious patronage of
 his day.

Decline the court's intrigues, the senate's strife,
 To serve his country in secluded life; 460
 To ope new arteries of public health,
 Promote her pride, and circulate her wealth;
 Call forth a Brindley's genius, and command,
 To pierce opposing mountains with his wand;
 Through wondering vales, in liquid course to lead
 Commercial keels, and navigate the mead;
 Bid in bright tracks obedient currents glide,
 And, like a river-god, direct the tide.

When love of painting (late a passion) came,
 With kindling zeal he caught the novel flame; 470
 To joys unfelt before with rapture sprung,
 Forgot his age, and found he still was young.
 Though late he fell, had fate deferr'd the blow,
 And left him yet a few short years below,
 His country's genius sure, had found a friend, 475
 Pleas'd to reward, and pow'rful to defend:

Line 463. *Call forth a Brindley's genius, &c.*—Brindley, a most ingenious mechanic and skilful engineer, employed by the Duke of Bridgewater in planning and executing his operations of inland navigation.

The sons of Taste had shed the grateful tear,
And Painting wept the patron, in the peer.

Gods! what a glory would invest his name!
What palms perennial spring around his fame! 480
Whose gen'rous spirit should our age reprove,
And to the living arts extend his love:
Who, leaving to the selfish pedant crew,
The barren bliss of impotent virtù;
The sterile triumphs which result from taste 485
To buried worth in tardy homage plac'd,
Should to his cares the nobler task assign,
To draw the gems of genius from the mine;
Assist the little lustre life allows,
And set them blazing on Britannia's brows! 490

Give me the critic bred in Nature's school,
Who neither talks by rote, nor thinks by rule;
Who feeling's honest dictates still obeys,
And dares, without a precedent, to praise;
Whose hardy taste the bigot crowd disclaims, 495
That chorus catalogues, and worship names;

Unbiass'd still to merit fondly turns,
 Regardless where the flame of genius burns,
 Whether through Time's long gloom transmitted
 bright,
 Or pour'd a later lustre on the sight; 500
 From Rome's proud dome it dart a beam divine,
 Or burst spontaneous from a Cornish mine.

Where judgment cool, correct, yet kind reveals,
 A head that studies, and a heart that feels;
 Where zeal, with sense attemper'd, we discern, 505
 A skill to teach, and yet a love to learn;
 An eye, to truth attracted strong, a mind,
 By Nature vigorous, and by Art refin'd;
 Slave to no system—bigot to no school,
 Consulting reason, while respecting rule; 510
 Aw'd by no pedant—echo to no peer,
 In censure civil, and in praise sincere;
 A soul to rescue worth by pride abas'd,
 At once the patriot, and the man of taste;
 There, bow ye sons of Art ! in homage down; 515
 Respect the patron, and the critic crown.

Yet rarely, though such merits now combine,
 And stars like these are seldom known to shine;
 Ye generous youths! by Nature's bounty grac'd!
 Whose throbbing hearts have heard the call of Taste,
 With honest ardour in the lists of Fame, 521
 Risk every hope, and rival every claim.
 What though the age on Art unfriendly lowers!
 And public apathy benumbs her powers;
 Though Painting still deplores her luckless fate, 525
 Shut from the church, and slighted by the state:

Line 526. *Shut from the church, and slighted by the state.*—
 While the contest between the two greater sects of Christians
 was comparatively new and unabated, it was perhaps, not
 wonderful that the zeal of the reformer sometimes led him into
 extremes, and prompted him to reject with horror many
 things indifferent in themselves, on no other ground than be-
 cause they were sanctioned by those from whose principles in
 other respects he so earnestly dissented. From this over-
 strained spirit of opposition at the outset of the Reformation,
 it resulted, that our churches were stripped of their ornaments,
 and pictures expelled as objects of Pagan idolatry and Popish
 superstition: the house of God was reduced to the nakedness
 of bare walls; and though the art of architecture was allowed
 to be displayed in all its capricious varieties, and that of sculp-
 ture occasionally called in, to adorn the shrine of the hero and
 the saint, yet the art of painting was proscribed as a profane

Denied each nobler theme the soul that fires,
That pious zeal, or patriot pride inspires ;

abomination, unworthy of contributing its portion of pious decoration to the temple, or even furnishing a frontispiece to the book of Common Prayer*. But surely, in an age like the present (amongst the dangers of which, certainly those resulting from idolatry and superstition are not much to be apprehended), some relaxation of this puritanical prejudice might be admitted, without any injury to religion, and with much advantage to the arts. As there appears no very good reason why a picture should be esteemed more profane than a statue; why a prophet in fresco should be considered a less becoming ornament to a cathedral than a statesman in stone; or why the acts of the Apostles should not be commemorated in our temples, as well as the exploits of kings and conquerors; surely, it would not be inconsistent with the purest piety to take off this long interdict of taste, and admit painting once more within the pale of the church.

It has been observed of our national mode of worship, as well as of our national manners, that there is a coldness and reserve about it, an unalluring formality, a repelling plainness but little calculated to excite fervour or to fix attention. Though it may be unworthy of rational piety and a pure faith, to prop their interests by meretricious aids, and the author is far from recommending such assistance, yet in loose and negligent times it may not be unwise to use every innocent means

* Queen Elizabeth is reported to have reprimanded severely one of her chaplains, for having presumed to present to her a Prayer Book with cuts.

Though Fortune's self with Fame confederate flies,
To crown th' o'ervalued skill of foreign skies; 530

of animating indifference, to zeal; and by furnishing the scene of our devotions with objects to stimulate our feelings, and illustrate the events of sacred history, attract those by taste who might not be influenced by piety. A judicious representation of some of those striking incidents which are recorded in the pages of Holy Writ, might warm the heart to a sentiment of devotion, when the best pronounced prayer from the reading-desk, or the most eloquent discourse from the pulpit, might be delivered without effect* :

Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.

A few years ago, a proposal was made by some of our most eminent artists, to furnish a number of appropriate pictures for the decoration of St. Paul's Cathedral; but, unfortunately, it was not approved by those persons whose consent was essential to the plan. However, as an example has been set by the august head of the church in his Majesty's chapel at Windsor, and also, in the chapel of Greenwich Hospital, without any apparent ill consequence, it is to be hoped that the remains of this conventicle spirit will soon be exhausted. Perhaps the decoration of our religious temples may yet call forth the genius of a British Raphael or Michael Angelo, and become so productive a source of encouragement to the arts, as to

* "Pictura, tacens opus et habitus semper ejusdem, sic in intimos penetrat affectus, ut ipsam vim dicendi nonnumquam superare videatur."

QUINTILIAN.

Still undismay'd, let Hope her light impart,
And bold Ambition brave the ills of Art.

Grac'd by the Muse with all her gifts divine,
Or pious led by Taste to Nature's shrine ;
The soul to purer worship rais'd—refin'd, 535
Disdains the common idols of mankind ;
Exults in joys to grosser minds unknown,
A wealth exhaustless, and a world her own.

The painter's eye, to sovereign Beauty true,
Marks every grace, and heightens every hue; 540
Follows the fair through all her forms and wiles,
Studies her airs, and triumphs in her smiles;
Imagines wondrous scenes as Fancy warms,
And revels, rich in all Creation's charms.

authorize us to apply the words of Juvenal, and say of the national taste,

“ Et quam votiva testantur fana tabella
Plurima : pictores quis nescit ab Iside pasci ? ”

Line 544. *And revels, rich in all Creation's charms.*—What has been said of madness, may also be said of painting—there

His art her homage, and his soul her shrine, 545
 She rules his life, and regulates his line ;

is a pleasure in it which none but painters know. The painter enjoys moments of delight in the practice of his art (if he truly loves it), which more than compensate for its anxieties, and cheer with a ray of consolation even the gloom of neglect and obscurity.

Accustomed to direct his attention to all that is picturesque and beautiful in nature or in art, in form, character, and sentiment, his ideas are exalted, his feelings are refined beyond the comprehension of common minds, or the attainment of ordinary occupations; he is, as it were, let into a new world, and looks around him with an eye conscious of the wonders he beholds; he is an enlightened spectator in the vast theatre of the universe, under whose critical eye the great drama of human life is performed; he observes with discriminating accuracy the actions, passions, and characters, the manners, scenery, and situations; and though the wants of nature, and the duties of society, oblige him to mingle occasionally in the busy group before him, yet the world is not his element; he is not at home on the stage of active life; his mind is ever struggling to escape the claims of common incident, and soaring to those heights of abstracted contemplation, from which he may view the actors and the scene with the calmness of a looker-on.

The painter derives pleasure from a thousand sources which are not only unknown to

“The plodding herd of coarser clay compos’d,”

While rapt to frenzy as the goddess fires,
He pours to view the visions she inspires.

but even generally unappreciated by the most enlightened minds devoted to other occupations; his art may be said to furnish him with a new sense, through which new qualities appear to exist in things; objects are invested with new splendours, and the whole face of nature seems to wear an appropriate charm, whether dressed

“ In smiles or frowns—in terrors or in tears.”

Beyond the poet in the strength of his conceptions, as well as in the force and fidelity with which they are expressed, he is more alive to what passes around him; external objects take a stronger hold of his imagination; the impressions of beauty, of grandeur, of sublimity, sink deeper into his soul. His art, estimated according to its noblest examples, considered in every view of mental or manual ability, appears to be the most arduous enterprise of taste, and, without injustice to other pursuits, may be termed the most extraordinary operation of human genius; in its theory and principles unfolding the most subtle refinements of the intellectual power, in its practice displaying the most dexterous achievement of mechanical skill.

The only character indeed, that can pretend to rank with the painter in the great scale of human ingenuity, is the poet: but *he* has not been satisfied with equality, he has commonly contended for a higher station; and having been usually judge and jury in the cause, he has always taken care to decide it in his own favour. Yet an impartial investigation, by abilities

Presented to the cultur'd eye of Taste,
 No rock is barren, and no wild is waste; 550

competent to the task, of the powers displayed in both arts; of the qualities from nature and education which they respectively require, would perhaps amend the record, if not reverse the decree. What is there of *intellectual* in the operations of the poet, which the painter does not equal? what is there of *mechanical* which he does not surpass? He also is one "cui sit ingenium, cui mens divinior." The "os magna sonaturum," indeed, is not his; but he has a language more general—more eloquent—more animated; as much more arduous in its attainment, as it is more extraordinary in its effect. Where their arts resemble, the painter keeps his level with the poet; where they differ, he takes a more elevated ground.

The advantage which poetry possesses over painting, in continued narration and successive impression, cannot be advanced as a peculiar merit of the poet, since it results from the nature of language, and is common to prose.

The eye of the painter is required to be as much more sensible and acute than the eye of the poet, as the accuracy of him who imitates should exceed that of him who only describes. What is the verbal expression of a passion, compared to its visible presence; the narration of an action, to the action itself brought before your view? What are the "verba ardentia" of the poet, to the breathing beauties, the living lustre of the pencil, rivalling the noblest productions of nature, expressing the characteristics of matter and mind, the powers of soul, the perfection of form, the brightest bloom of colour, the golden

No shape uncouth, or savage, but in place,
Excites an interest, or assumes a grace ;

glow of light? Can the airy shadows of poetical imagery be compared to the embodied realities of art?

Where the poet cursorily observes, the painter studies intensely; what the one carries loosely in his memory, the other stamps upon his soul. The forms and combinations of things, the accidents of light and colour, the relations of distance and degree, the passions, proportions, and properties of men and animals; all the phenomena of "the visible diurnal sphere," the painter must treasure up in his mind in clear, distinct, indelible impressions, and with the powers of a magician call them up at a moment's warning, like "spirits from the vasty deep" of his imagination,

"To do his bidding, and abide his will."

From the nature of the medium through which the poet operates, he has an advantage over the painter which considerably facilitates his progress. As verse is constructed of language modified by number and measure, the poet may be said to pursue, in some degree, a preparatory course of study from his cradle; he never talks but he may be considered as sharpening his tools, and collecting his materials; his instrument is never out of his hands, and whether he reads, writes, or converses, he exercises his faculties in a way that appears to have a direct reference to his art, and to be a prelude to his performance.

The painter, on the other hand, makes use of a medium that has no analogy to speech, no connexion with any of his ordinary

Whether the year's successive seasons roll,
Or Proteus passion paint the varying soul;

habits or acquirements; his art speaks a language of the most uncommon construction, and most comprehensive influence; demanding the unremitting application of a life to produce that facility of expression—that fluency of graphic utterance, by which only, he can hope to address himself effectually to the passions and understandings of men.

If to become familiar with the writings of the ancients, to comprehend their beauties, and compose in their language, be the proudest attainments of the scholar and the poet; how much more worthy of admiration is the skill of him who pours forth his ideas in the glowing language of Nature! who becomes familiar with all her beauties, who learns by heart all her characters, though numerous and varied, to an extent that reduces the amplitude of the Chinese tongue to a contracted alphabet; and who can trace them through all their combinations, from the simplest blade of grass in the field, to the most complex example of her power, in that alpha and omega of her hand—the hieroglyphic miracle, man.

Such instances of premature excellence as we so often see with surprise in the other pursuits of genius, are entirely unknown in the annals of painting; the difficulties of his art, while they condemn the painter to unremitting exertion, at least spare him the mortification of finding himself outdone by rivals from the school-room or the nursery: no spring of inspired infancy, no sallies of premature vigour, can snatch from his astonished hopes those wreaths which are never yielded but to the patient energies of time and toil.

The citadel of art is not to be taken by a coup-de-main; no

Whether, apart consider'd, or combin'd, 555
 The forms of matter, and the traits of mind ;
 Nature, exhaustless still, has power to warm,
 And every change of scene a novel charm.
 The dome-crown'd city, or the cottag'd plain,
 The rough cragg'd mountain, or tumultuous main ;
 The temple rich in trophied pride array'd, 561
 Or mould'ring in the melancholy shade ;

forced march of the faculties can surprise it; we must besiege it in form, proceed by regular approaches, and depend more on persevering vigilant investment, than sudden or violent assault.

The head and the hand are required to act with such equal influence, the intellectual and mechanical to combine in such cordial co-operation, that the most exalted genius must submit in the arts, to be indebted to long and laborious application for those powers which no precocious ability can attain.

If we remark the different periods at which poetry and painting have respectively adorned the progress of society, it may still further illustrate the characters of the two arts. Poetry appears to be the first powerful product of human genius*, painting, the last and most delicate of its offspring. The one is a plant that shoots up, often to its greatest luxuriance in the open field of society; the other, a flower never produced till the soil has been long laboured and purified—till the field has been converted into a garden.

* Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV. remarks, "Such has been the fate of the human mind in all countries, that verse has every where been the first child of genius, and the parent of eloquence."

The spoils of tempest, or the wrecks of time,
 The earth abundant, and the heaven sublime;
 All, to the painter purest joys impart, 565
 Delight his eye, and stimulate his art.

From sense reclaim'd to bliss of nobler birth,
 He envies not the bustling sons of earth,
 Who anxious climb the heights of wealth and power,
 The care-cloth'd pageants of a restless hour; 570
 For him, unlock the springs of finer joy,
 The stores of soul—the sweets that never cloy;

Poetry attained to its greatest perfection in times comparatively simple and rude, when man was little more than emerging from the shepherd to the agricultural state; Hesiod poured forth his strains while tending his flocks on Mount Helicon, and Homer exhausted all the treasures of the muse some ages before the combined operations of nature and cultivation had produced an Apelles, a Parrhasius, or a Zeuxis.

The works of taste seem to be performed by the last and highest process of the human intellect, when in the full maturity and expansion of its powers, sifted and refined through a long succession of ages: they are enjoyments only to be obtained when the full supply of all our coarser necessities has impelled us to look for higher gratification; when long possession of the useful has excited a demand for the ornamental, and ease has left us leisure for elegance.

Great poets, like the stars of the morning, are often seen to

Nature for him, unfolds her fairest day,
 For him, puts on her picturesque array ;
 Beneath his eye new-brightens all her charms, 575
 And yields her blushing beauties to his arms :
 His prize, and praise, pursu'd in shades or crowds ;
 He fancies prodigies, and peoples clouds ;
 Arrests in rapid glance each fleeting form,
 Loves the mild calm, and studies in the storm.

shine in the early dawn of cultivation ; great painters gild the horizon of society only in its meridian blaze.

The influence of the poet is more general, more commanding, more important in the great concerns of life : but the task of the painter appears more arduous, is more out of the high road of human ability, and demands a more extraordinary combination of natural and acquired powers.

The painter may be said to unite the talents of the poet and the actor ; he composes the scene, and fills up the characters of the drama ; he realizes the visions of fancy, and not only recalls the exploits of antiquity, but revives the heroes by whom they were performed.

His, are the superiorities of imitation over description—of sensation over reflection : he writes in the characters of nature the language of action and expression, and approaches nearest to the powers of the Creator in the noblest imitation of his works.

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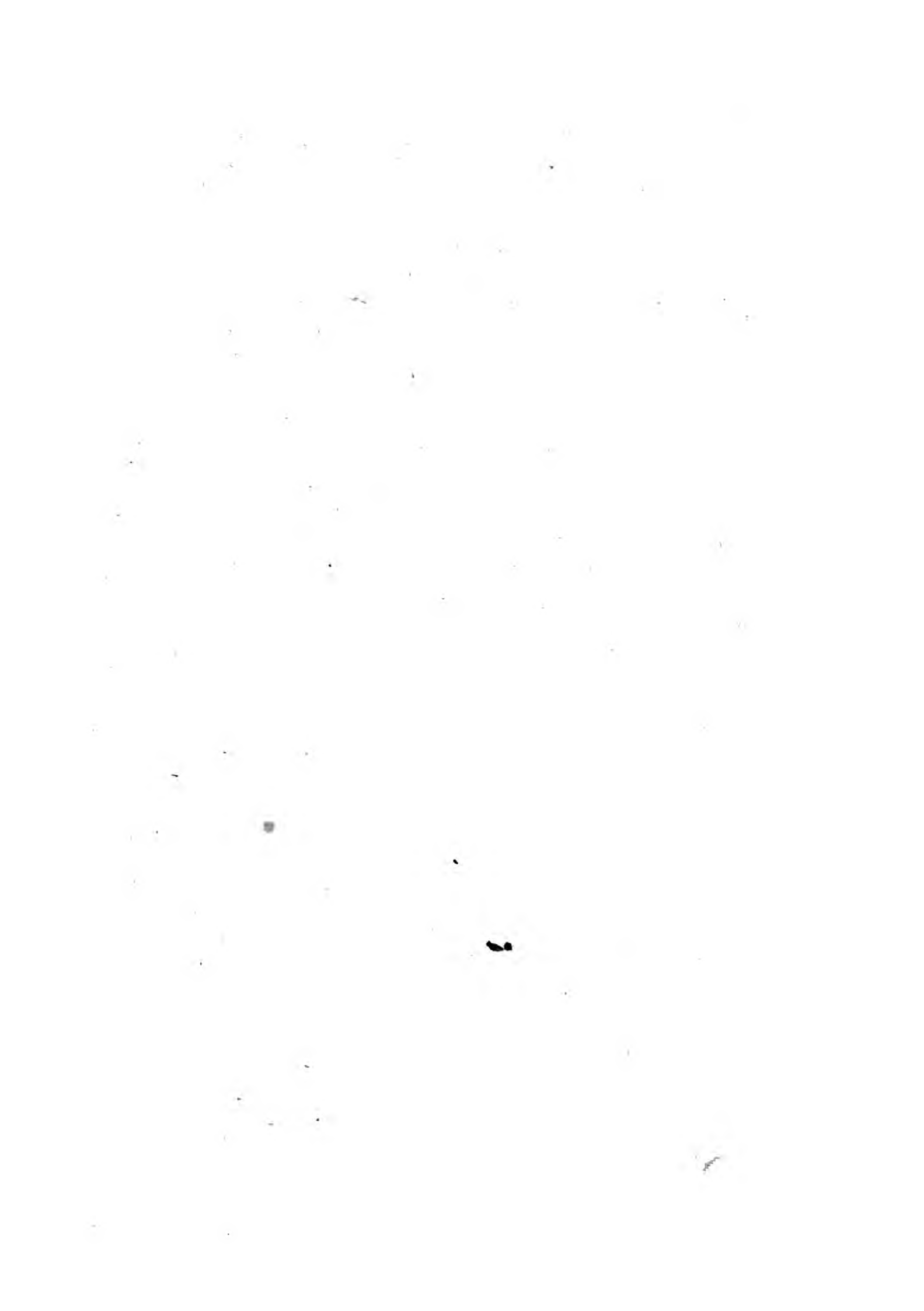
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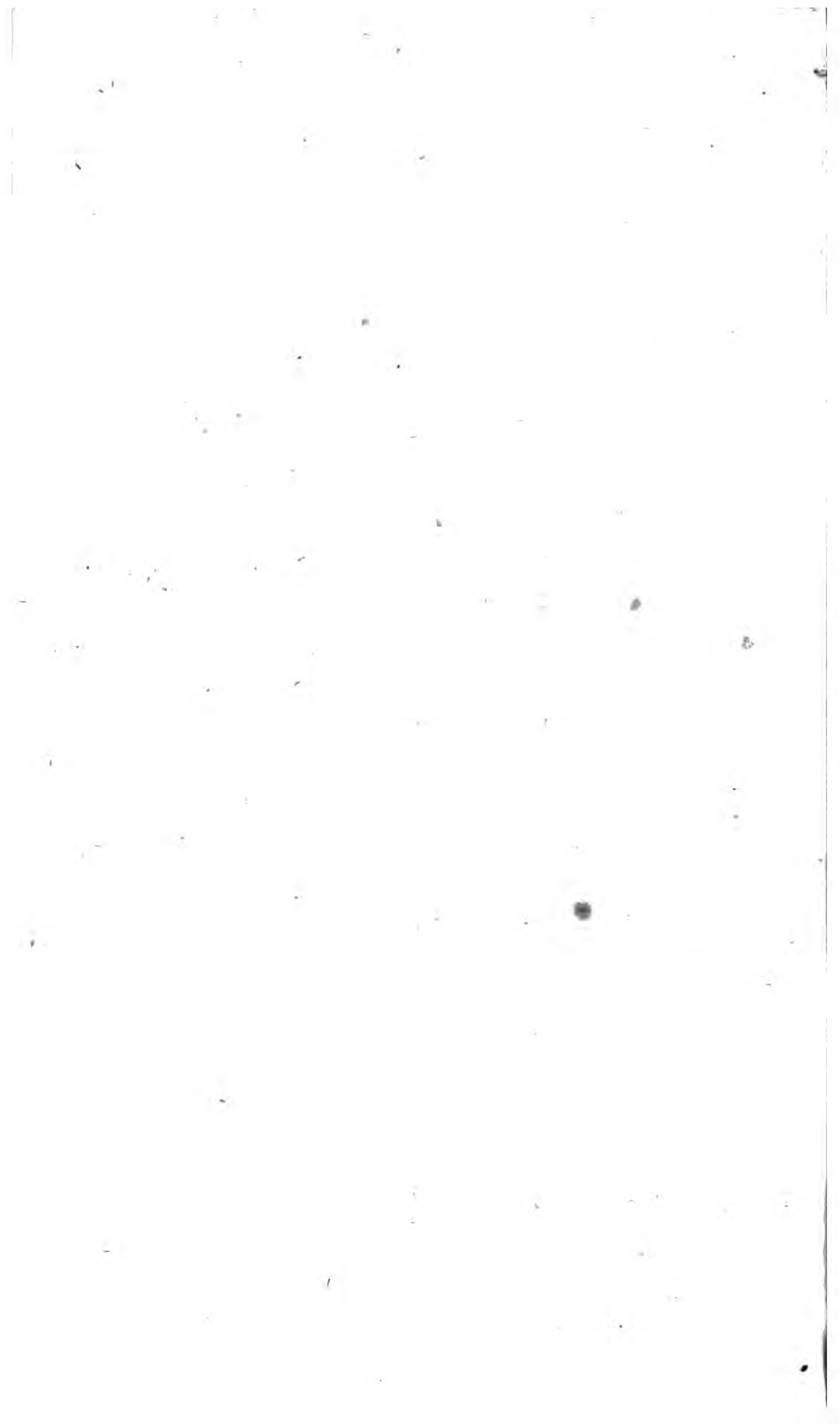
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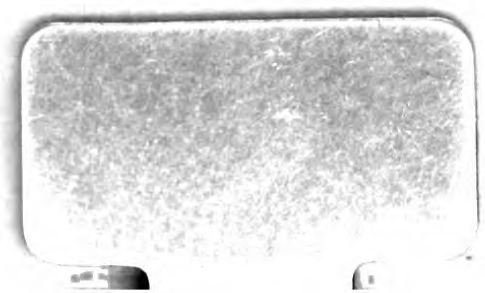
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