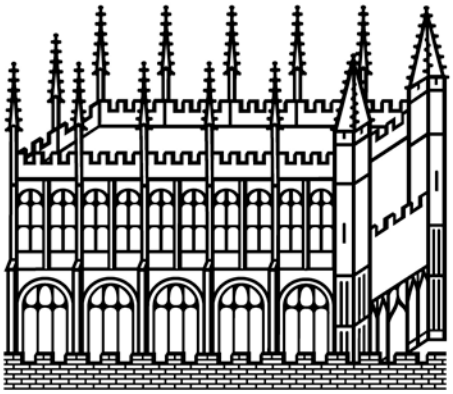

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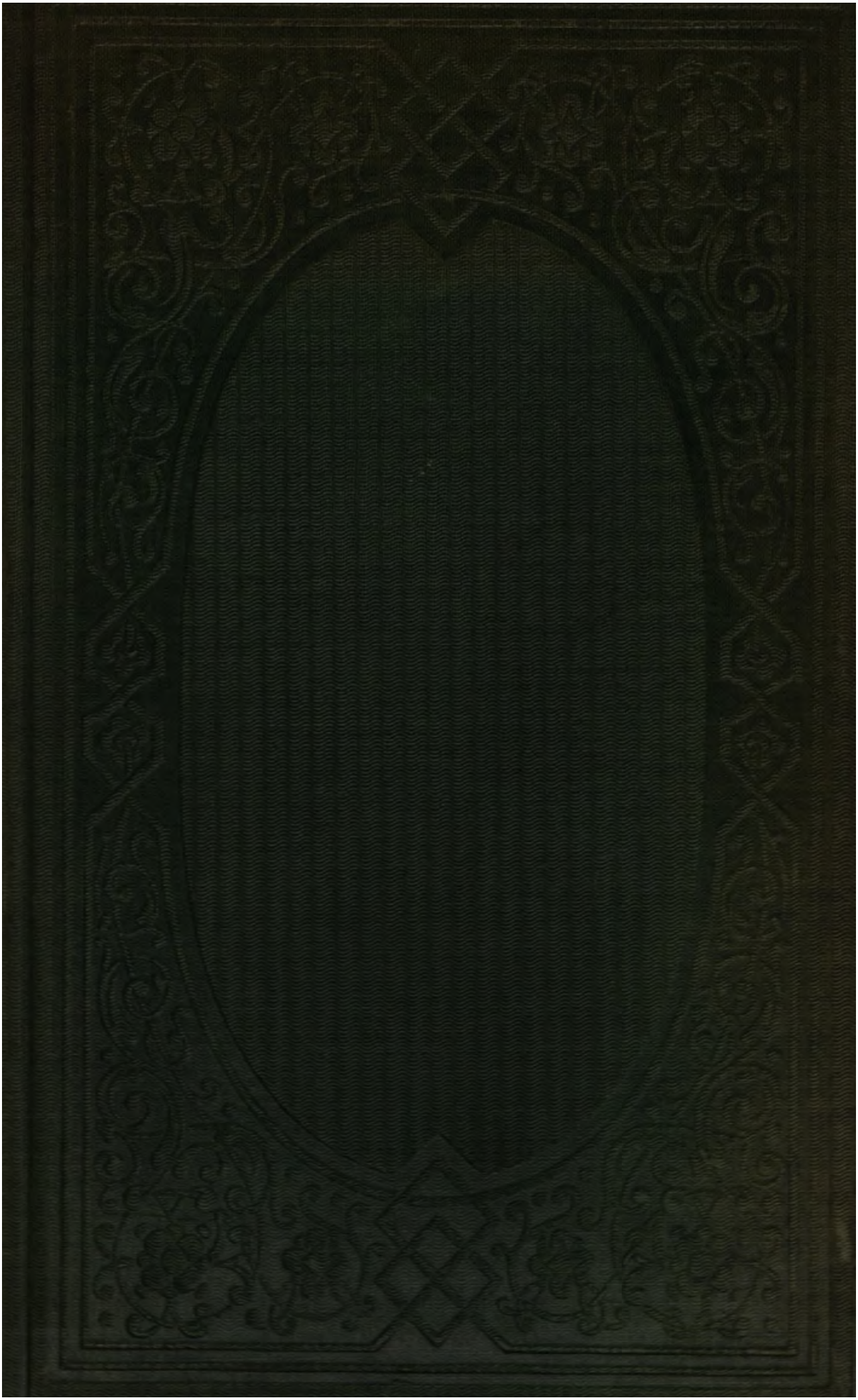

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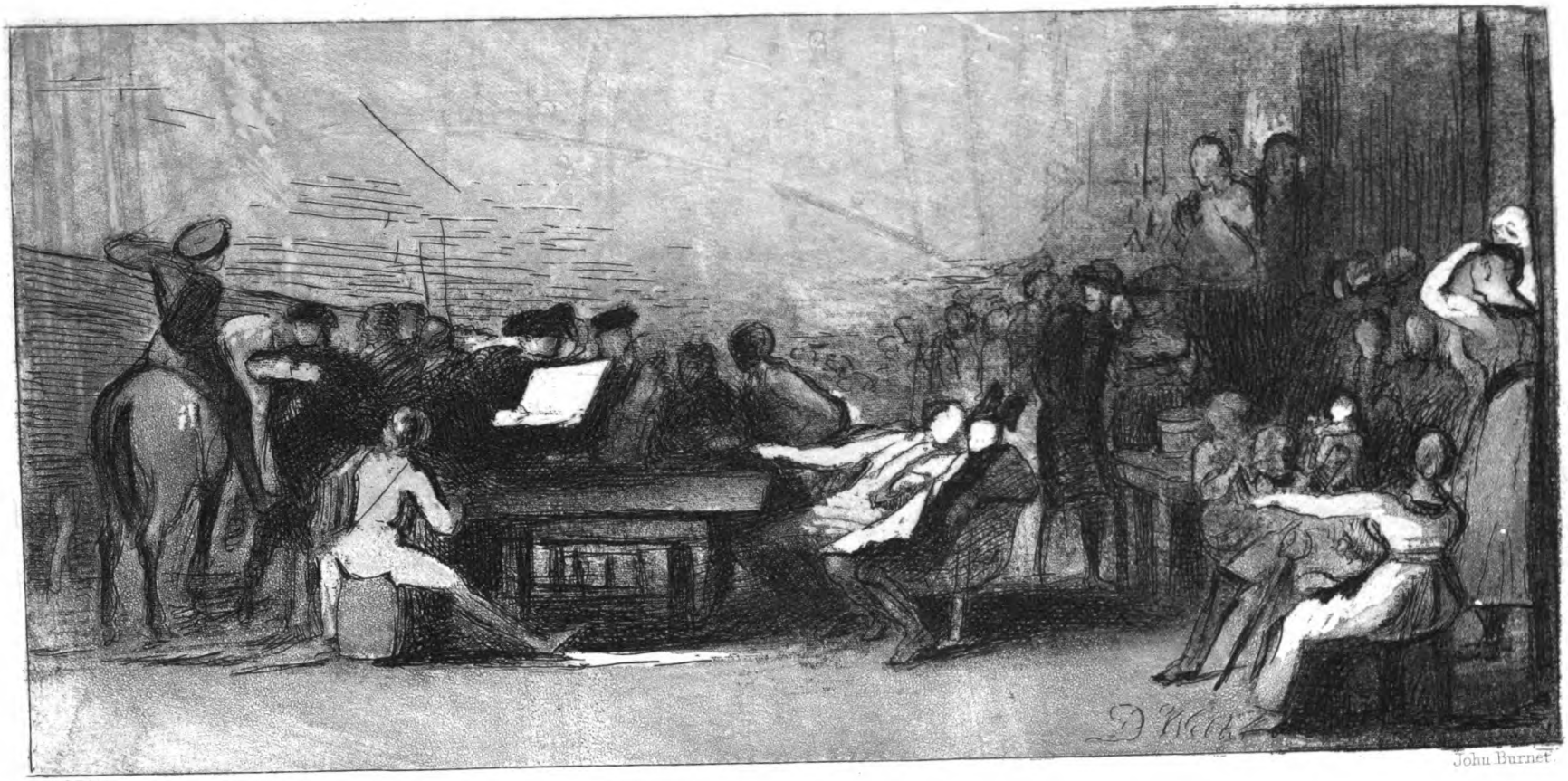

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TO

CHARLES FOX, ESQ.

THESE ESSAYS ARE INSCRIBED,

IN TESTIMONY

OF

THE AUTHOR'S REGARD.

PREFACE.

THE following Essays were originally written for a Periodical, the early numbers of which are now out of print; as they were published not consecutively, nor all falling into the same hands for perusal, their effect must have been materially impaired. I venture now to publish them in a compact form, so that the little merit they may possess may be more conclusive. Though published without a signature, I am gratified to find so little to erase, when now given to the public with my name, having always considered that when professional men write anonymously upon Art, their contemporaries should be even more leniently dealt with than when writing without a mask. I have added a few explanatory notes to make some passages more intelligible; for though Fine Art can never alter, yet fashion may overlay it with absurdities, and a few years may

remove from the scene of action the men who were the perpetrators of such absurdities.

Through the whole tenour of these short Essays, it will be perceived that I have always advocated the necessity of allowing artists to be the best judges of Art, as they must have given more attention and study to the subject than any other class. Since their original publication, Art has been deprived of one of its greatest ornaments,—the late Sir David Wilkie. I have, therefore, availed myself of the opportunity to extend the article on "Fancy Subjects, and Scenes of Familiar Life," by adding a critical inquiry into his principles and practice, which an uninterrupted friendship, from our first entering the Academy together till his death, gave me every means of being acquainted with.

May, 1848.

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PRACTICAL ESSAYS ON ART.

I.

HISTORICAL PAINTING IN ENGLAND.

PART I.

When John Knox pronounced from the pulpit that it was preposterous to imagine the Lord could be pleased with a "Kist o' whistles,"* the same blow that demolished the organ-loft destroyed also the ornaments of the altar; and pictures and carvings were burnt, and statues broken up, as the "graven

* "A kist of whistles," *i. e.* a box of musical pipes. This stern reformer, by fixing a contemptuous phrase on one of the most solemn accompaniments of the human voice, paved the way for its extinction, as an adjunct of Popery; in like manner, the destruction of all pictures and images paved the way for the demolition of the churches and cathedrals that contained them. "Man is a religious animal, he will worship;" hence it is that religion has been the nurse of the Fine Arts from the earliest times to the present; and however we may excuse the enthusiasm of the great movers of the Reformation, in the expulsion of works of art, we still hope that both statues and pictures will be received into the places of worship of the purest Protestant church.

images" of idolatrous worship. The music took refuge in the songs and ballads, which has stamped a peculiar plaintive air over the national melody: for even where the measure was changed, and set to loose and immoral words, for the purpose of bringing it into ridicule, it has influenced, in a high degree, the character of the Scottish music. The sister art was less successful, for Painting, like the dove of Noah, "could find no resting-place for the sole of her foot," neither could she return to her sanctuary, but perished, and left no trace behind; and though in England the reformers did not go the unholy length of "dingin' doon the cathedrals," they defaced and demolished everything in the shape of religious pictures and sculpture; what remained of them after the suppression of monasteries and chapels were burnt by an order of the House of Commons, in 1645, which runs, "especially those pictures having a representation of the Virgin and Child." And at the destruction and sale of Charles the First's effects, the cartoons of Raffaelle might have shared the same fate, had not Cromwell paid into the treasury three hundred pounds to have them assigned to himself. The arts thus driven from the church—the cradle and great sanctuary of Historical painting—it never can be properly considered as having taken root in England, for its features were

changed to suit the conceptions of the people. With Raffaelle the purity of design may be said to have died; for though, after the sacking of Rome, it revived in Venice, yet it assumed a more allegorical and ornamental shape, which clung to it also in Flanders when flourishing under the pencil of Rubens; and when the stream of wealth drew the art into Holland, it assumed a still more humble aspect, and became little more than a faithful representation of familiar life, in which shape alone it may be said to have become congenial to England. Nor can it be said to have improved in dignity of subject under English nurture. Artists, like authors, are but caterers for the public appetite: and when critics complain of the slow advances of the English school in what is termed "high art," the class of subjects on which they are employed ought to be always borne in mind. On a reference to the pictures of the Italian and Venetian schools, we find that, through a long space, their genius was nourished and strengthened by subjects such as the following, which not only demanded refined thoughts and the highest style of design, but engendered corresponding sensations in the artists—viz., 'The Last Supper,' 'The Nativity,' 'The Resurrection,' 'Christ in the Garden,' 'The Holy Family,' 'The Entombment,' 'Peter Martyr,' 'The Adoration of

the Shepherds,' 'The Transfiguration,' 'The Crucifixion.' While, on reference to the catalogues of the present time, we find the genius of the English artists confined to the productions of such pictures as 'Look, Ma!' 'Grandma's Spectacles,' 'Blowing Bubbles,' 'Smoking the Cobbler,' 'The Cat's Cradle,' 'The Tight Shoe,' 'The White Mouse,' 'Grandfather's Fairing,' 'The Broken Pitcher,' 'The Paper Lantern,' and a thousand others of the same stamp, where anything like style in either drawing or colouring would be detrimental to the effect. Compared with such a class of art, portraiture, though by Reynolds placed in the lowest grade, is dignity itself, and much more likely to lay a foundation for a school on which posterity may build, when the taste of the people becomes refined. Yet, though historical painting is at present at so low an ebb, there are individuals, both artists and patrons, who have, to their honour, stood boldly forward to protect and foster the higher branches of painting. But in order to bring the subject more clearly before our readers, it will be necessary to revert to an earlier period; and, without wading through the rubbish that deformed the walls or ceilings, in the shape of allegorical absurdities, we shall clear all away, for the purpose of giving West

the honour of laying the foundation-stone of the Historical school of painting in England.

What West has achieved in restoring Historical painting to the purity of its original channel, can only be appreciated by those who have contemplated the debauched taste introduced into this country by Verrio, Laguerre, and other painters, who revived the ridiculous fooleries patronized in the reign of James the First; but which had, by the countenance of the nobility and people of fashion, taken strong hold of most men's minds. Cunningham, in his life of West, says, "A change was now to be effected in the character of British art; hitherto, historical painting had appeared in a masqueing habit; the actions of Englishmen seemed all as having been performed, if costume were to be believed, by Greeks or by Romans. West at once dismissed this pedantry, and restored nature and propriety in his noble work of the 'Death of Wolfe.' The multitude acknowledged its excellence at once; the lovers of old art, the manufacturers of compositions called by courtesy, classical—complained of the barbarism of boots, and buttons, and blunderbusses, and cried out for naked warriors, with bows, bucklers, and battering-rams. Lord Grosvenor, disregarding the frowns of the amateurs, and the, at best, cold approbation of the

Royal Academy, purchased this work, which, in spite of laced coats and cocked hats, is one of the best of our historical pictures. The Indian warrior watching the dying hero to see if he equalled in fortitude the children of the desert, is a fine stroke of nature and poetry." Nor was this triumph achieved over the multitude alone, but the head of the nation, and the head of the fine arts, were both filled with misgivings, respecting this new doctrine. "When it was understood," says West, (in Galt's life of this artist,) "that I intended to paint the characters as they actually appeared on the scene, the Archbishop of York called on Reynolds, and asked his opinion; they both came to my house to dissuade me from running so great a risk. Reynolds began a very ingenious and elegant dissertation on the state of the public taste of the country, and the danger which every innovation incurred of contempt and ridicule; and concluded by urging me to adopt the costume of antiquity, as more becoming the greatness of my subject than the garb of modern warriors. I answered, that the event to be commemorated happened in the year 1758, in a region of the world unknown to Greeks and Romans, and at a period of time when no warriors who wore such costume existed. The subject I have to represent is a great battle fought and won; and the same truth which

gives laws to the historian should rule the painter. If instead of the facts of the action, I introduce fictions, how shall I be understood by posterity? The classic dress is certainly picturesque, but by using it, I shall lose in sentiment what I gain in external grace. I want to mark the place, the time, and the people, and to do this I must abide by truth. They went away; and returned when I had finished the picture. Reynolds seated himself before it, and examined it with deep and minute attention for half an hour; then rising, said to Drummond, 'West has conquered—he has treated his subject as it ought to be treated. I retract my objections: I foresee that this picture will not only become one of the most popular, but will occasion a revolution in Art.'" "I wish," said the King, to whom West related the conversation, "that I had known all this before, for the objection has been the means of Lord Grosvenor's getting the picture; but you shall make a copy for me." This anecdote, though it operates against the foresight of Sir Joshua, carries truth on the face of it. But we must bear in mind that a revolution was coming over the minds of men in other matters besides painting; the stage, the great "veluti in speculum," has also undergone a complete reformation in costume. Nothing could persuade the great Roscius of that day from playing

characters of the deepest tragedy in a full court dress. Only fancy in our times the murderer of Duncan coming on in a bag-wig and dress-sword! To the late John Kemble we are mainly indebted, for this great assistance in producing a reality to the illusion. Though Reynolds acknowledged his error respecting the strictness of the costume in historical painting, he seems never to have given up its impracticability in works of sculpture. In his tenth discourse he says, "The desire of transmitting to posterity the shape of modern dress must be acknowledged to be purchased at a prodigious price, even the price of *everything* that is valuable in art. In this town may be seen an equestrian statue in a modern dress, which may be sufficient to deter future artists from any such attempt; even supposing no other objection, the familiarity of the modern dress by no means agrees with the dignity and gravity of sculpture."

Had Sir Joshua lived to our times, and seen what has been accomplished by Bacon, and Sir Francis Chantrey, he no doubt would have joined in the general approbation. Indeed, we even question whether "the City of London and the corporation thereof," would tolerate the Duke of Wellington sitting on horseback, with the naked legs of Julius Cæsar. But leaving these digressions, though na-

turally springing out of the subject in question, we return to the great founder of the English school. His 'Death of General Wolfe,' his 'Battle of the Boyne,' and his 'King Lear in the Storm,' (as they are all engraved,) must convince every one of his just claim to that appellation, perhaps in a higher degree than the pictures, as his colouring was bad, his handling mannered and hard, and both tending to destroy the effect of the leading features of historical painting, invention, and composition. And while we return to West, to George the Third we must accord the merit of being, not only the founder of the Royal Academy, but the great patron of West, and encourager of historical painting. The King not only gave him a pension of £1000 a year; but when the artist hinted that the noble purposes of historical painting were best shown in depicting the excellences of revealed religion, the monarch threw open St. George's Chapel to be decorated with sacred subjects; and, on his Majesty's restoration to health, finding that the work had been suppressed, and the money withheld, he instantly ordered him to be paid, and the works proceeded with. These things were not only creditable to his Majesty, as one of the greatest patrons of historical painting, but also as to his enlightened and liberal views on the subject, and form a striking contrast to the treatment the

Art received from the heads of the Church at the same period. For when the Academy proposed to decorate St. Paul's with works of art, in the hope of its influencing other churches throughout the kingdom, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, West, Barry, Dance, Cipriani, and Angelica Kauffman offered pictures free of expense, the Bishop of Bristol, Dr. Newton, at that time, Dean of St. Paul's, warmly took up the idea; but the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London refused their consent. The Bishop of London said, "My good Lord Bishop of Bristol, I have already been distantly and imperfectly informed of such an affair having been in contemplation; but as the sole power at last remains with myself, I therefore inform your lordship that whilst I live, and have the power, I will never suffer the doors of the metropolitan church to be opened for the introduction of Popery into it!"

Notwithstanding this "heavy blow and great discouragement" to the cause of English Art, the example of his Majesty was the cause of many altar pieces being painted by West and others; one of the best of which is the very appropriate one in the chapel of Greenwich Hospital, representing Paul after his shipwreck in the island of Melita. But it is not by a few solitary instances such as these, that a School of Design can be formed: the stream of

patronage must flow through a long space of time, and a succession of artists exerting their talents on the highest class of subjects, which would not only have a beneficial influence upon the taste of the people, but also refine and elevate the inferior branches of the art itself. Driven from the Church, the parent of historical painting from the earliest ages, the British artists turned their thoughts to subjects connected with the history of their country, filled as it is with many of the brightest examples of virtue, talent, and courage; and the 'Death of Chatham,' the 'Sortie of Gibraltar,' and 'the Battle of La Hogue,' showed their capability of producing works worthy of being handed down to posterity, and laying a foundation for a school of painting worthy of a great nation; and had they been painted of a large size, decorating the halls or palaces throughout the kingdom, as in Rome, or Venice, or Florence, they would ere now have been engendering in the minds of the people the most beneficial results: in place of which, they are only known by the engravings from them, to the excellence of which they owe, perhaps, their present existence—else we might have had to search for them in the garrets or lumber portfolios of the dealers in old prints, along with ephemeral productions of the same period, such as the 'Marriage of George the Third,' the 'Baptism of the Prince of

Wales,' 'General Cornwallis receiving the Children of Tippoo Saib as Hostages,' and many others, that "strut and fret their hour upon the stage, and then are seen no more." These productions had, therefore, little weight either with the nation or the Government, for on Parliament voting several sums of money to record the Deaths of the Heroes, or their glorious actions during the last war, sculpture was preferred to painting, as being more durable, and also more suitable to the taste of the people; thus another opportunity was lost on which Historical Painting might have expanded her genius; and her sons were driven once more into the hands of the printsellers and booksellers for protection and patronage, unless they chose, like Barry, to paint gratuitously the Public Halls. The Society of Arts, wishing to patronize and stimulate other inventions besides reels, and wheels, and spinning jennies, offered premiums for the best pictures of Landscape and History. Their deciding in favour of the ill-assorted combinations of Smith of Chichester, when competing for the prize with Richard Wilson, showed their total incapacity to comprehend the more difficult department of Historical composition; but a desire to create a school of painting in England at this time, seems to have infected all classes; and authors and artists combined to divert the current of some of the tributary

streams, that were pouring in their waters to the channel of commerce and manufactures. Johnson, as well as others, lent his aid, and in one of his papers in the Idler, he says, "In a nation great and opulent, there is room, and ought to be patronage, for an art like that of painting in all its diversities; and it is to be wished that the reward now offered for an Historical picture, may excite an honest emulation, and give beginning to our English school." After giving a few hints as to the nature of the subjects, he proceeds to give a pen-and-ink sketch of 'Cromwell dissolving the Parliament;' and, as the Doctor was a high church and state man, and a "good hater," it is marked with a boldness and vigour that makes West's picture of the same subject, look tame and insipid. "If the design were not too multifarious and extensive," he observes, "I should wish that our painters would attempt the 'Dissolution of the Parliament by Cromwell.' The point of time may be chosen when Cromwell looked round the pandemonium with contempt, and ordered the *bauble* to be taken away; and Harrison laid hands on the Speaker to drag him from the chair. The various appearances which rage, and terror, and astonishment, and guilt, might exhibit in the faces of that hateful assembly, of whom the principal persons may be faithfully drawn from portraits or prints; the irresolute repug-

nance of some, the hypocritical submission of others, the ferocious insolence of Cromwell, the rugged brutality of Harrison, and the general trepidation of fear and wickedness, would, if some proper disposition could be contrived, make a picture of unexampled variety and irresistible instruction." Here we possess a sketch with the true feeling of a master, combining all the bustle of Tintoretto with the gloomy firmness of Caravaggio; and giving us his idea, how much action and expression contribute to the existence of an Historical composition. The printsellers and publishers of the period were not behindhand in joining the general excitement, and the Shakspere Gallery, and Bowyer's History of England, were planned to embrace the talents of the principal British artists.

Before, however, proceeding to investigate the effect of these works upon the progress of Historical painting, it will be necessary to explain what is generally considered the component parts of a school of painting, and what is strictly Historical.

HISTORICAL PAINTING IN ENGLAND.

PART II.

THE great characteristic and leading features of the higher branches of Historical Painting are simplicity, and purity of outline, and that completeness of form which more especially belongs to sculpture; by simplicity we do not carry the art into the region of symbolic character—such as we see in the Egyptian, or early Grecian figures, where the most formal contours, both of the naked and draped forms, embody the personification of the mysterious and sacred rites and ceremonies, but that simplicity of form and action which is observable in the graceful productions of nature; if geometrical character or formal exactness is apparent, the work belongs to a different department of the art than the highest branch of historical painting lays claim to. This branch, as if conscious of its own importance, seems to disdain the aids of studied embellishment, and accomplishes its object by the development of truth alone; the action of each figure is the action most

common to be observed under the same excitement; and the drapery ought to be adjusted, not to show the figure off to the greatest advantage, but as if every fold felt the influence of the attitude which it covers. When simplicity assumes any other guise, it is no longer the simplicity of nature, but belongs to the Egyptian, Grecian, German, or any other school that warps it to a particular purpose. Purity of outline in the same way emanates from general nature, and men that are lean, fat, short, or tall, are to be regarded as accidental deviations from her original mould, and rejected accordingly. The historical painter is required to paint men—not a particular class or species of men; he is to paint the mind; and as he cannot make his hero speak like a great man, he must make him look like one. Reynolds says this may be considered more poetical than historical, as it is a deviation often from the truth; for even in sacred history, where little licence ought to be allowed, Raffaelle has made the apostles all men of the highest cast, though, according to their own description, some of them were of mean stature and aspect; but the painter has no other way of making them look like men inspired, and capable of performing great works. This purity of outline is to be found in perfection in the great examples of Grecian sculpture; and though they have deviated in

a certain degree from their general standard, in giving some the characteristics of swiftness, or strength, or youthful beauty, yet their figures owe their celebrity to the combined excellences of selected nature. Raffaelle, who stands at the head of historical painting, has deviated in some measure from this purity of outline, and also in the proportions of his figures; his heads and hands are larger than either those of the Greeks, or the best Italian sculptors and painters; but with him these are the great seats of expression and action, whereas in others it is often in the general contour of the whole figure; his forms are consequently less poetical than the ideal grandeur of Michael Angelo's characters, but they convey a greater degree of the truth of nature, and also of historical narration. The completeness of form, for which we are contending as a necessary adjunct in historical composition, requires also some explanation, for Reynolds, in his notes on Fresnoy, says, "No figure that is a complete composition of itself will unite well with others, so as to make part of a group; nor will any figure of a well conducted group stand by itself;" but, without disputing so high an authority, it may be remarked the 'Ananias,' the 'Elymas,' and the 'Paul preaching,' in the Cartoons of Raffaelle, are complete of themselves, as complete as the 'Dying Gladiator,' the 'Discobulus,' or any

other figure of Greek sculpture, yet combine excellently with the other parts of the composition, not by their depending upon the adjoining figures for completion, but by those figures partaking of their form or colour. This completeness allows the mind of the spectator to dwell upon the principal figure, so as to receive the full effect of the incident, in place of being instantly removed to the surrounding parts. In writing, we find the most sublime passages are complete in a single sentence; and in painting, the same effect may be produced, if the artist will imbue every part of his figure with the natural effect of the action to be expressed, in place of endeavouring to contract each limb, or fold of drapery with the greatest variety of lines. The action ought to be that which is most common, choosing such a position of the figure as shows it to the greatest advantage. Raffaelle's works are filled with examples of the overpowering force of natural sublimity; in this, he resembles in a degree, our immortal Shakspere—Nature seems to speak through his means, making him the medium of unfolding herself to mankind; so that the same inscription is alike applicable to the poet and the painter's tomb—

> Illi hic est Raphael, timuit quo sospiti vinci
> Rerum magna parens, et moriente mori.

Having thus endeavoured to express briefly the

component parts of the higher walks of the art, the inferior schools require little elucidation, being a gradual declination according as they are embellished with detail, or mechanical excellence; and though, as Reynolds says, justly, "that it is necessary to introduce into a work a certain degree of individuality, to give it an interest and a greater appearance of truth, yet nothing requires greater skill and caution than this departure from general ideas;" it is the addition of matter to mental superiority, and degrades it into an inferior department of the art. This it is that by excess lowers the Venetian school in comparison with the Roman; everything seems introduced for the purpose of gratifying the eye without going beyond the portals of the mind. Tintoretto had an idea of combining the forms of Michael Angelo with the colouring of Titian; but except in the 'Peter Martyr' of the latter, it has seldom been accomplished. The late Sir Walter Scott used to say that when he told a story, he generally contrived to put a laced coat and a cocked hat upon it; this is a good illustration of the Venetian practice, their stories look like the spectacles of a melodrama.

The various schools exhibit their peculiar character, principally in their form or mode of composition of the subject, as may be seen by prints; but the management of the chiaro-scuro, the arrangement of

colour, and also the handling and mechanical working of the colours, all contribute to stamp the varieties; and though those varieties undoubtedly owe their existence to the great masters whose works influenced the productions of succeeding painters, yet other circumstances combine towards forming a decided character, such as the customs, or dresses of the country, its scenery, and even the influence of the atmosphere. For example, we can trace the influence of the works of Titian and Correggio in the Escurial, in forming the Spanish school; we can even perceive the presence of Rubens in forming a Velasquez; but the character, the colouring, the backgrounds, are neither Venetian nor Flemish—they are Spanish; hence arise the peculiarities of the school.*

* Both the costume and scenery most suitable for sacred or scriptural subjects have been matters of investigation with many artists; for, seeing that the greatest masters of the Italian, Venetian, Spanish, and Flemish schools have availed themselves of what was within their reach, and painted the characters and backgrounds of their own localities, it was naturally inferred, that, painting from the present race—a people not liable to much change either in their physiognomy or dresses—and also making fac-similes of the identical spots mentioned in Holy Writ, not only would many absurdities be avoided, but pictures would be produced of a more truthful and striking nature; but these ideas are by no means conclusive: the scenery may be more correct in a topographical point of view, but not at all calculated to assist the mind in going back into remote periods of time; so likewise may be the countenances and drapery of the people. There is a certain absence of what is familiar to

The great range which historical painting embraces, from the most ancient records down even to the moment in which we write, necessarily require different modes of treatment; thus, sacred history demands the simplest and highest style, both as to form, and light, and shade, and colouring; while national historical events require a greater degree of individuality, to mark the epoch or country where they occurred, for the business of painting, like playing, "is to show the very age and body of the time, its form, and pressure;" hence arises the difficulty of an artist, in contending often with the meanness and familiarity of character, or costume; and according as the event approaches our own time, he is obliged to introduce details often detrimental to the dignity of the work. The interest and character

our eye necessary, and, if I may be allowed the expression, a certain poetical licence to be used, which will appear nearer to the truth than dry matter of fact. Müller, Lewis, and Roberts have given all that can be got by going to the Holy Land, but we do not associate with their works the place where God descended to hold communion with Abraham, or where our Saviour ascended into heaven. The nearest approach to the sublime mysteries of Scripture is to be found in the works of Raffaelle, from their being arranged on great general principles, without attending to minute detail. The late Sir David Wilkie travelled into the East for the express purpose of painting from the people and scenery; but from an examination of the sketches he sent home, I am still of the opinion that his pictures, followed out upon this plan, would have failed in carrying the mind of the spectator to an early period of time.

which time stamps upon a work, can only be felt by future generations, nor do future generations take that interest in events which are exciting only while the actors are alive. Hence many works are ephemeral, and are lost and destroyed, ere they become born again.

With these preliminary remarks, we will now return to the subject of the progress of Historical Painting in England, and more especially to the formation of the Shakspere Gallery, as a means of calling into action the genius of the country. It is humiliating to reflect, that, as works of art, these pictures are scarcely known but by the prints engraved from them; the causes of this failure are many, but only require to be noticed to be perceived. When the work was projected, the enthusiasm of the painters, enkindled by the formation of the Royal Academy, was still undamped, and they only longed for an opportunity to display their power. The opportunity was embraced with avidity, without weighing well the extent of those qualifications to be brought to the undertaking, or the remuneration necessary to keep such qualifications at a high pressure. To illustrate Shakspere, the great favourite of the English nation, who rises in reputation as the people grow more enlightened, whose works are quoted and repeated with delight by one generation

as it descends into the grave, and read with avidity by another as it rises into existence, seemed of all others a scheme to secure popularity and profit; but to embody and carry out in a picture a representation of any scene that would either illustrate or convey the same gratification, which the great poet does in his own captivating manner, required greater powers than were brought into operation.

Johnson, in his inquiry into the peculiarities of excellence, by which Shakspere has gained and kept the favour of his countrymen, says, "Shakspere is above all writers, at least, above all modern writers, the poet of nature—the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies and professions which can operate but upon small numbers, or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions; they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets, a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakspere it is commonly a

species." To embody the descriptions of such a writer, so as to ensure equal popularity, required the genius of a Raffaelle, or one who looked upon mankind with perspicuity, in the highest degree curious and attentive, and had, at the same time, equal command over his material to make his knowledge effective. A painter can only learn the mechanism of his art by studying the works of the great masters who have preceded him; but often in such study imbibes a manner of expressing his thoughts, injurious to the vital impulses of nature. Johnson says, "Shakspere, whether life or nature be his subject, shows plainly that he has seen with his own eyes; he gives the image which he receives not weakened or distorted by the intervention of any other mind; the ignorant feel his representations to be just, and the learned see that they are complete." To do this, however, the poet requires but words; the painter requires the power of drawing, and a knowledge of chiaro-scuro and colour, to make his drawing effective. Another advantage the poet has over the painter—the one draws the image to the mind, and which every mind fills up to his own satisfaction; the painter's representation can neither be altered by caprice nor imagination, and therefore only pleases a limited number. The principal cause, however, of the failure of the works in question, and

the impediment, in consequence, given to the advance of Historical Painting in England, was the breaking out of the French Revolution. Alderman Boydell, who was the projector and paymaster of the work, not only found the Continent shut against all hopes of profit from that quarter, but the whole of Great Britain engaged in the bustle of war. Feeling, therefore, that the whole of his fortune was likely to be swallowed up in an unproductive speculation, inferior artists were employed, or those of a high class received inferior remuneration. Many of the works are, therefore, slight and unstudied, and entirely destitute of those qualities which belong to the highest walk of the art. Those of Reynolds will always be appreciated, and though not Shaksperian, nor great as historical compositions, his 'Macbeth,' 'Cardinal Beaufort,' and 'Robin Goodfellow,' are worthy, from their colour, to adorn any school. For the first two Sir Joshua received fifteen hundred guineas, besides a fee of five hundred to enter the list of contributors. We may therefore presume that the work was undertaken, in the first instance, with the most liberal and patriotic views. Next to the President, the compositions of West ought to be mentioned; but unfortunately, that which enhances the designs of Reynolds, is wanting in those of West. Except the 'King Lear in the Storm,' rendered popular by

the engraving of Sharp, he has contributed nothing worthy either of Shakspere or himself. Independent of the charm of colouring, so essential in small pictures, they want that appearance of truth and identity of nature which add an intrinsic value to works of art. They are coldly felt, and coldly expressed; with the facility of execution which characterizes the works of Shakspere or Raffaelle, he is devoid of those strokes of individual representation which stamp an idea of reality on the most sublime passages. Shakspere takes an image of the most common kind, which is familiar to every one, and works it into a picture of the most sublime imagery; he first gets hold of the reader's mind, and having given him the thread, carries him through the most intricate passages.

Raffaelle intersperses the most imaginative combinations with portions of the most accurate fidelity; this is what Reynolds calls giving a work a *dash* of individuality to give it interest. This is the instinctive discernment that enables genius to walk along that space which is divided but by a step; this individuality of character, and minute detail in parts, is, however, perceivable in West's earlier works. One of the original projectors of the work, likewise, and one who followed it also with the greatest enthusiasm, was Fuseli. Born in the German school of metaphysics, the lessons of his childhood the works of

Michael Angelo, and Lavater (the great searcher and expounder of the secret mysteries of mind, from the outward form and colour of matter) his companion; we cannot wonder that the aërial department, the ghosts, fairies, and witches of Shakspere, seemed as if formed on purpose to display the powers of his pencil; and his ghost scene in Hamlet, his witches in Macbeth, and the fairies in Midsummer Night's Dream, also his Caliban in the Tempest, will remain examples of his genius, and of the character his works have stamped upon this series of illustrations; but his representations of Jack Falstaff, or his trull, Doll Tearsheet, will show us how much early education will influence future productions. They are not only German, but figures of the earliest German school animated into action by the magic wand of Michael Angelo. It is said, "Strong drink is not fit for babes," neither are the works of Buonarotti fit to be put into the hands of schoolboys. The line that divides the ridiculous from the sublime is visible only to the mind of mature reflection; hence, we see all those who have fearlessly rushed into the style of Michael Angelo in their youth, have been carried away by the torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of the "terribile via," without acquiring or begetting that temperance, so necessary, as Shakspere says, to give it smoothness. Michael Angelo in his youth ac-

quired a correct knowledge of nature and the beauty of the antique sculpture, which enabled him to clothe his colossal and supernatural forms with the essence of mental refinement; but he who "in his youth sees visions, and in old age dreams dreams," without a constant intercourse with nature, will find she will, as it is termed, constantly put him out, when he attempts to give "these airy nothings a local habitation and a name." As the works of Michael Angelo have been a stumbling-block to many besides Fuseli, we may here notice what Reynolds says on the subject: —"Those masters are the best models to begin with who have the fewest faults, and who are the most regular in the conduct of their works. The first studies ought rather to be made on their performances than on the productions of eccentric genius; where striking beauties are mixed with great defects, the student will be in danger of mistaking blemishes for beauties; and, perhaps, the beauties may be such as he is not advanced enough to attempt." But independent of the fantastic forms and overstrained actions of the figures of Fuseli, his heavy and cold mode of colour is also detrimental to the popularity of many of his pictures: the murky sky, suitable to ghosts and witches, makes a dull curtain to o'er-canopy the perfumed and enamelled flower-bed of fairies. And this is another reason why it is neces-

sary for a painter to keep up a constant intercourse with nature; for, whereas a poet, such as Shakspere, conversant with her imagery, had only to alter his words to represent her endless variety, a painter, on the contrary, has to acquire a mechanical power of expressing his meaning by colour, touch, and exactness of form: if he, therefore, copies from the image represented in his mind, it will be distorted and discoloured, according to his warped or imperfect perception of it. Hence arises often what is called manner; if on the other hand, he draws immediately from the object in nature, it will preserve his eye from being more or less vitiated.

HISTORICAL PAINTING IN ENGLAND.

PART III.

In resuming our essay upon Historical Painting, the space precludes us from entering into a critical examination of the works of all the contributors to the Shakspere Gallery, neither would it be pleasant nor profitable; on many the grave has long closed—upon their productions and themselves. With the pupil of Sir Joshua, Northcote, we naturally return to the investigation: his 'Smothering of the Princes in the Tower' possesses all the higher requisites of historical composition, and is one of those designs which prove how much simplicity of arrangement is conducive to make a lasting impression; with the truth, and vigour of nature, he often conceived his subject in the true historical feeling, and rendered it with a boldness of feature unattained by any of his contemporaries. Of this, his 'Death of Wat Tyler,' and 'Death of the Duke of Argyle,' will long remain examples. This firmness of composition Opie had in a great degree; but his figures want refinement,

and his shadows, reflections; he is, however, one of those whose decision of light and shade, and largeness of parts, prevented the art from being rendered effeminate by the prettinesses of Angelica Kauffmann and the Rev. Mr. Peters. Though these men are thus cursorily mentioned, it does not follow that the services their works rendered to the existence of all that is valuable in art is not fully appreciated. The success of Alderman Boydell, in engraving the works of the English school, instead of importing engravings from France and Holland, induced many small printsellers to enter the field: with a more limited capital, and less taste, inferior works were introduced into the market; and the public eye, taking its tone from what is most constantly presented to it, was gradually debauched, and rendered incapable of appreciating real merit: every branch of the art felt the influence of this destructive blight; but works of a true historical class, being less captivating to the million, changed their character to render them more palatable, or were entirely thrown into the background. The designs which the genius of Smirke embodied, though not of a strictly historical character, upheld for a long period that department of the art which depends upon agreeable arrangement of composition, and chiaro-oscuro for its existence: his comic scenes from Shakspere,

though undoubtedly the best in the work, fall short of that identity of character with which the great master of nature has marked them; nor do they become more individual, or increased in their finish or detail, according to their enlargement. Increase of size gives little increase of interest; the smallest sketch, though extended on a half-length canvas, creates the same feeling in a spectator; no reference to nature disturbs the flowing elegance of outline, nor are the soft blandishments of his shadows ever broke in upon by those flashes of light or firmness of form which are to be found in truth and in the works of the best masters. These defects were very perceivable, when Leslie painted his picture of 'Sancho and the Duchess:' every one exclaimed how much it reminded them of Smirke; but a little examination convinced them how much further the work was carried in all the requisites which constitute a finished performance.

Since the Peace, the public have had greater opportunities of examining the finest examples, and have become more acquainted with what the art can achieve. Nor in comparing the pictures of Smirke with those of Stothard do we find these deficiencies filled up. Based upon the graceful outline of Raffaelle, the works of this captivating artist have kept the art in its proper path; but his fertility of inven-

tion never seems to have permitted him to pause, so as to perfect what his genius had conceived, and that fascination which belongs to a sketch, remains a leading feature in all his works: had he cultivated a more constant reference to nature, his pictures would have assumed a higher and more lasting character; for we perceive even the rapid pencils of Tintoretto and Rubens arrested in their progress by portions of the most careful finish and minute detail. If, however, the higher branches of Historical Painting have made small progress by the palette of Stothard, we ought never to forget that the taste of the country is greatly indebted for its improvement to the embellishment by his pencil, of all the popular works of his time.

With a mere notice of De Loutherbourg and Richard Westall we must close this brief sketch of the contributors to the work of the Shakspere Gallery. Had the historical works of the first partaken of the truth and character found in his naval subjects—such as his representations of the battles of 'The First of June' and 'Camperdown'—he would have done the art some service; or had those of the latter been of a quality such as his 'Cardinal Wolsey entering Leicester Abbey,' we would not have wished that his works had been confined to the illustrations of Shakspere. We must, however, bid

a truce to this period of our subject, and hasten on so as to reach the conclusion of the Essay within our limits. It is, nevertheless, necessary to remark, that notwithstanding the formation of the Royal Academy, the excellent lectures of Reynolds, and the enthusiasm of many individuals, historical painting has never rested amongst us. Except as a probationary school, no academy can carry the student beyond the mere capability of correct drawing, unless it is furnished with examples to place before the pupils, and professors to point out their leading beauties and defects; without these, books and lectures can accomplish nothing. If knowledge alone could enable the artist to paint a great historical picture, the President himself would have succeeded; but what was the result when the Empress Catherine of Russia commissioned him to paint a great work for her? he found himself as much at a loss, in all the characteristic, essential features, as any of the pupils to whom he was lecturing; he acknowledged, when it was finished, that there were twelve pictures under it, some better and some worse: an agreeable and rich effect of colour it certainly possesses; but to accomplish which, every other quality is sacrificed; so much so, that when it was unpacked at the Hermitage in St. Petersburgh, they did not know which was the base,

so little do the stability of the figures proclaim it: a French artist, who was present, acknowledged it had at least one great merit,—that it looked equally well whichever way it was turned. Or if enthusiasm was all that was requisite, Barry would have established historical painting on a sure footing in England; but, alas! from him she acquired little more dignity than Reynolds had been able to give her. Sir Joshua, having had all his life to contend with the stiff and formal cut of coats and waistcoats, obliterated their meanness of form and colour, by losing them in a deep-toned richness of effect: to this alone his eye was constantly turned; consequently those hard and boldly pronounced passages, so necessary in a great historical work, to give it truth and grandeur, his feeling revolted from expressing, against his better judgment. Barry, on the contrary, never possessed this feeling; he took every opportunity to express his contempt for it. With a great vigour of intellect, and nursed in the contemplation of the works of Michael Angelo and Raffaelle at Rome, everything was expected from him; and Burke and Reynolds hailed his return as one who was destined "to restore in England the dignity of the dying art." His few pictures he had painted were allowed to be crude; but that was even considered a necessary adjunct to the grand style; and the Society for the Encourage-

ment of the Arts, longing after an opportunity of rendering some service to their country, Barry (with scarce a shilling in his pocket) proposed to paint the four sides of their hall with a series of historical subjects, and for a sum little more than necessary to pay for his models and colours. The Shakspere Gallery, Bowyer's History of England, and the anxious encouragement of George the Third, as patron of the Academy, having failed to produce a great historical painter, Barry, with the greatest enthusiasm for his art, unencumbered by a family, and despising the comforts of luxurious ease, devoted his whole soul to the undertaking, accompanied by a dogged pride to put to shame the ill-natured jealousies of his professional brethren. Like Milton, he fancied himself "fallen on evil days and evil tongues," and shunned the haunts of men. Without, however, entering into the whims and caprices of this ingenious artist, or exposing the contempt and neglect which followed his eccentricities, we must proceed to notice as briefly as possible his great work in the Adelphi. As it was undertaken to vindicate the honour of British art from the calumnies of Winkelman and others, it ought to be looked upon favourably, and more so, when we consider the privations and discouragements under which he laboured while the work was in progress; but neither

these, nor his excellence of character ought to prevent us from giving our conscientious criticism on the work. As a grand attempt to embody the higher qualities existing in the great Italian frescoes, it fails from its want of dignity; the forms and attitudes are familiar, and devoid of firmness: when we compare these pictures with the works of Michael Angelo or Raffaelle, they remind us more of the pen-and-ink washes of Mortimer. The draperies are little and meagre, with folds not much broader than the strokes of a brush, in place of those noble and ample masses which we perceive in the Cartoons, and all Raffaelle's large works; but the details are not less faulty than the conception of the whole, which in many parts is only a shade better than the ceilings of Thornhill: the strange mixture of allegory and familiar truth would have required the gorgeous colouring of Paul Veronese, or the palette of Rubens to make it acceptable, instead of which the gravity of treatment and dryness of colouring tend to make the combinations more startling and absurd.

It may be argued that Raffaelle, in several of his works, has combined the figures and dresses of his day with the most ancient costume and ceremonies; but it must be borne in mind, that the Roman dress, in the time of Leo the Tenth, was simple, and grand, and pictorial in a high degree; but Barry has ven-

tured to contend with cocked hats and lapelled coats. In the picture of 'Elysium,' for example, we have William Penn in the full dress of a Quaker, showing his Pennsylvanian code of laws to a couple of half-naked figures, designated Lycurgus and King Alfred; the arrangement, also, from the association of ideas, contributes to rob 'Elysium' of its supernatural grandeur; for the interminable rows of portraits remind one forcibly of the congregation of heads displayed, pasted on a board, in a bookseller's window; and the effect is rendered still more ridiculous from their being seen emerging out of banks of yellow earth. Were we, however, to enter into an examination of all the absurdities of the undertaking, we might extend our criticisms to more vulnerable points; it is sufficient, therefore, to say, that an opening is still left in England for a Michael Angelo or a Raffaelle to be produced. We, however, ought to mention, for the credit of Barry, that he never prostituted his art to pander to the vitiated taste of the public: would we could say the same of his contemporaries. If, therefore, he has advanced the art but little in England, he has never degraded it. With Barry, the true feeling for historic painting has become extinct; his mantle lies like a garment infected with the plague—many have the courage to

look upon it, and long for it; but the certainty of poverty and death has acted as a "nolo me tangere."

The English works of the last century seem more as if they were the painters' recollections of the various scenes, than the scenes themselves; they are destitute of that startling severity of character which always accompanies nature's works, and are slurred over so as to defy criticism, from there being nothing tangible to lay hold of: the asperities of form, of features, and minute marking are left out, or are softened down like coins long in circulation: what remains, is the artist's mannered style holding out to the last; and this seems equally the case, whether the work is intended for a small book print or for the decoration of a palace. Reynolds's advice, "Let your studies be made rather with the brush than the port-crayon," has been followed up to the strict letter; and the English school, however faulty in other departments, abounds with beautiful arrangements of colour. In most branches of the art, this quality will cover a multitude of sins, and in many of them it is their chief dependence; but historical painting demands much higher attributes, and asserts her vigour, and purity of outline, however overlaid and enveloped by colouring and chiaro-oscuro: this prettiness and suavity of man-

ner has now become a disease, and the public will receive nothing but what is of this character. Boldness, hardness, largeness, have given place to softness, smoothness, and littleness; and until a change takes place in the public taste, historical painting not only will cease to flourish, but even to have an existence in England. This state of things is partly owing to the arrangements of the Royal Academy, and the strictly mercantile views of the London printsellers. Of the education carried on within the walls of the Academy, it is not strictly relevant to speak, did it not in a certain degree bias the character of all works emanating from that school; for, drawing entirely from the antique, and undraped figures, it begets a partiality for flowing, undulating lines, in preference to those harsh and angular forms constantly occurring in the endless variety of Nature's works; as an eye educated in drawing from a ball would naturally revolt from the asperities of a cube: but of the influence the Academy possesses as a body over the taste of the public, every one must be aware, and perceive a yearly spring-tide spread over every minor establishment.

All bodies can only exist by a certain compact, understood and acted upon amongst themselves; and those works which do not conform, are so disposed of as not to damage those which do, hence a

certain uniformity of character; and the harmony observable on the walls of the exhibition very soon proclaims whether a Reynolds or a Turner strikes the key-note. However they might have appeared in the presidency of Sir Joshua, a work of Titian or Correggio would now look dark and dingy, amongst the modern pictures, and their superiority would be proclaimed in consequence. Hence solidity, strength, and tone, all highly requisite, and existing in the best historical works, have given place to white-washed crudities and effects of light: works that satisfy and amuse the eye in a transient glance are all that claim attention; hence the absence of true legitimate art. With the exception of Wilkie's 'John Knox' and 'Columbus' (pictures that would do honour to any country), and one or two of Hilton's, and others', Historical painting has gradually become extinct; and her higher attributes, which can only be appreciated by a few, are prostituted to the ignorant attractions of the many.

While we were engaged with this Essay, we happened to visit the Haymarket Theatre, and amongst other things were amused with the effect of a drop-scene, where figures, statues, landscape, and sky seemed bathed in one uniform soft appearance; the attitudes, the light and shade, and colouring, yielded to each other the palm of tenderness. We could

not help feeling the force of that Shaksperian expression—

> " The evil that men do lives after them.
> The good is often interred with their bones."

Here were all the faults of Smirke, Stothard, and Singleton, carried to extremes, without any of their redeeming qualities; we turned involuntarily to the boxes, to compare it with Nature, and were struck with her triumphant superiority; for, being a general mourning, she presented a variety of glorious pictures, as if from the pencil of Titian or Velasquez: the dark dresses, relieved by a dull red background, the faces and hands of the richest and most luminous colour, interspersed with spots of pure white, of the most cutting and decided shapes, from kerchiefs and play-bills; and at intervals a burst of light from the chandeliers, that seemed to rouse the several groups from their dulness, and prevented them from being too obscure and heavy. Had the group bearing the Pope, in the 'Heliodorus' of Raffaelle, marched out upon the stage, it could not have more effectually demolished the drop-scene's pretensions to truth. We could not help feeling a satisfaction in reflecting, that Nature "lives not for an age but for all time," and is still in the same perfection as when Titian or Velasquez existed. When a better state of things will arrive, it is im-

possible to predict: the opening of the National Gallery to the constant gaze of the people will effect much, and the higher departments of the art may become gradually better understood and valued; but when we reflect that Hilton has recently been removed to his grave, from a death-bed surrounded by his unpurchased pictures; when we find the heading of Haydon's letters often from the Queen's Bench; when we see the names of Cook and Thomson, year after year, in the beginning, but never in the body of the Academy catalogue; he must be a bold man who will enter the lists as an historical painter.

In revising this Essay, we find many points omitted and names unnoticed that will come, perhaps, more properly under review, when treating of fancy subjects or pictures of familiar life; a class of painting which, as it has met with greater encouragement, has attained a higher degree of excellence.*

* Wilkie, in his Remarks on Historical Painting, recommends those who minister in this high calling "to ponder well on whatsoever they do, that all may be for the honour and dignity of art, and elevating to their character in the land wherein they dwell. Still," he adds, "it must be confessed, that in spite of the patriotism and genius of the artist, his talents, like a summer shower, may be wasted on a desert, and all his studies rendered vain, unless on the part of the world around him a disposition exists to sympathize with his studies, and reward with approbation his labours, without which, art, however it

may rise, cannot be said to flourish, in any land." He then inquires, "Have our people in this isle the desire to make works serviceable in promoting and exalting religious devotion, as has been done in Flanders, Spain, and Italy? or does art require the aid of that political policy which has elevated the school of France? In reply to these questions, all that can be stated seems to be this—that however disposed the public may be to place art on the table-land, no opportunity has yet been offered by art for the exercise of such lofty encouragement. The taste for art in our isle is of a domestic rather than an historical character; a fine picture is one of our household gods, and kept for private worship. But admitting, which we must, that we resemble the school of Holland, and the old school of France, in adapting art to man's private abode and domestic residence, rather than to the abbey or the public hall, may not the lover of art and England exclaim, 'What! and must we, who take the lead among the nations of the earth in all other departments of human genius, abandon the hope of rivalling foreign states, and cease to hope for the production of a series of great historical and devotional pictures, like those which render the Vatican immortal, the Palace of the Luxembourg renowned, and the Escurial famed over all the earth?'"—*Vide* CUNNINGHAM'S *Life of Sir D. Wilkie.*

Since those remarks were written, and these Essays first published, an opportunity has occurred which the Government has embraced, for the encouragement of Historical painting, in adorning the Houses of Parliament; and from what has already been achieved, we may confidently hope that the arts will not only be ennobled, but the love of the highest department of painting engendered amongst the people.

II.

PORTRAIT PAINTING IN ENGLAND,

WITH THE COMPARATIVE MERITS OF

VANDYKE, REYNOLDS, AND LAWRENCE.

PART I.

WHILE other animals were created to gather their food from the earth, and incline their heads downward, God made man, says Ovid, to hold his head erect, "ad sidera vultus," and that it might be a greater index to the mind, he has placed all the features in front, and given those features a greater projection than "the beasts of the earth," which render them capable of receiving a stronger light and shade; nevertheless, the endless variety of nature is so powerfully marked in other animals, that a shepherd can discern differences between the features of his flock, and a huntsman of his hounds, that to a common observer is incapable of belief. In the human countenance this variety, which constitutes the distinctive character between the likeness of one man and another, depends, in a great degree, in the

relative distance of the several features; for we perceive a likeness may be produced without those features being defined, by a few strokes of the pencil correctly put down, and a person also recognised at a distance too great for them to be perceived; next to the proportional quantities are the degrees of light and shade, which give the features their true projection and form; then come the colour, and expression. What many people consider a likeness, is none when examined by the eye of an artist, but is merely more like the person intended than another; and this deviation is so strong in some faces, that a child from memory may produce a likeness, such as those of Pitt, or Fox, Wellington, or Bonaparte. We also perceive many likenesses which make people exclaim, how "ridiculously like!" which arises from those deviations being caricatured; and, "disagreeably like!" when those features are strongly and harshly marked. The delicate differences of form, however, which mark the generality of mankind, require the most correct eye; and few sculptors can succeed in producing a female portrait, where those delicacies are more frequently found, than in the coarser markings of a male head. When we hear people cry out, that a portrait is as like as it can stare! we may rest assured it is a vulgar likeness; possessing neither those undulations of expression to be perceived in the living

original, which, by giving the beauty attendant on motion, heighten the interest; nor those generalizing principles which add dignity to the character. A favourable likeness, or such a one as will in some measure compensate for the absence of life, can only be produced by the hand of the great master, who knows where to leave out those littlenesses which give meanness, and heighten and enlarge by shadows, those portions which convey grandeur and beauty. Amongst the early portraits which attracted notice in England were those of Holbein, in the reign of Henry VIII., faithful in little matters, and possessing all the dry, inlaid, and minute detail of the early German school; and when compared with those of Titian, who flourished at the same period, they look like the work of a jeweller, or a worker in enamel; while those of the great Venetian bear the stamp of the painter in every touch: the one gives you a mere map of the face, the other the face itself, with all its projections and shadows; in the hands of the one the nobility look heavy, and timid, with little eyes and large noses; while the nobility of Titian look like a race of princes, begot by kings and warriors. In the one we recognise the principles of the Italian school,—broad, large, and grand, as laid down in the frescoes of Michael Angelo and Raffaelle; in the other, the painful fidelity of Albreght Durer and the

earlier German masters; while the one busied himself with copying the reflection of the windows in the eyes, or the intricacies of the inlaid gold armour when examined close to the spectator, Titian gave the appearance of both with a stroke of his brush, which, at a little distance, gives a more true and effective representation. Without entering into the cause more minutely of the superior excellence of Titian, we must haste on to the period when Vandyke returned to England at the request of Charles I., who, finding what a treasure he had lost in not giving him sufficient encouragement, sent Sir Kenelm Digby to invite him back. The arts in England must date their present high standing in portrait painting to the circumstance of Vandyke's settling in the country; for the efforts of Zuchero and other painters, though worthy followers of Holbein, were mere holders of the palette; like Pietro Perugino, till abler men appeared to take it in their hands. Rubens having been in England on an embassy a little previous, must have raised the art in the esteem of the nobility, from the fame which his talents had created on the Continent, and the reports of the Earl of Arundel, who was ambassador in the Low Countries; but as he painted little here beside the sketches for the ceiling of Whitehall, he deserves little mention beyond his being the great restorer of the

art after its extinction in Venice, and being the master of Vandyke. Jameson, another of his pupils, had previously settled in Scotland, but the qualities for which Vandyke is celebrated, and for which the present artists of England appreciate him, Jameson had no conception of. The education Vandyke had received in the school of Rubens enabled him to bring to the ennobling of his portraits those principles which confer a dignity and consequence on the portraits by Titian; and from his possessing a greater attention to detail, both in the colour and minutiæ, and a greater delicacy in handling, his works, especially those painted before he came to England, are the perfection of this branch of the art. His earlier portraits, painted in Flanders, possess great delicacy and finish, yet a fine, manly, historic character; those of Italy, and after his return, more firmness, and the crackly and luminous style of the Venetians; while in England he gradually became slighter in his finish, from the multiplicity of sitters, and often less imposing, from his painting many of his heads in a common light, with the window not high enough to give his shadows consequence.

The peculiarities and excellence of Vandyke's portraits may be easily perceived, even by a common observer; take for example the portraits of Charles I.: the head of the monarch in other hands looks mean,

peevish, and the several features defined with trifling terminations. In the hands of Vandyke, those features assume an importance from the style of drawing, and appear suited to form part of an historical composition, which requires grandeur, and largeness of proportion; even the masses of the hair, the manner in which the pointed beard and moustachios are arranged, contribute to this character: in other hands he looks like a man who has a scold for his wife; Vandyke, made him a king overwhelmed with the troubles of his kingdom, his melancholy adding to his look of dignity; and he appears "as a man full of sorrow and acquainted with grief." This greatness in Vandyke's style of drawing, his firmness, and fulness in the light and shade, and simplicity in the colour, pervades every part of his canvas: his heads and hands are generally large, and well marked, his draperies ample, his attitudes unaffected, and his expression noble; in short, all the requisites for great historical compositions are to be observed in his works: these qualities he no doubt acquired in the school of Rubens; but he possessed others which he must have learned in his observations on nature, and in the portraits of Titian. Rubens' outline is often mannered and tortuous, flowing out of one form into another, with little alteration.

Vandyke's, on the contrary, is full of variety, which gives it a greater appearance of truth, and individual character: the one is like a sentence without punctuation, the other is marked with points, which give it force and expression.

The countenances of Vandyke never lose their superiority over every other part of the picture; and even if the background is a sky, it is sacrificed to the light of the face: nor is this mode of treatment so contrary to nature, when examined upon a broad principle, for when we are introduced into the presence of the original, we are naturally attracted to the same point; this treatment we find very common in the works of Titian, where often the whole figure is lost in the background: another arrangement, which assists in conveying simplicity and dignity, he also learned from the great father of Portrait Painting—viz., the unaffected air derived from the head and body being placed in the same direction, —of his light and shade and colour, we shall have occasion to speak more at large, when we come to a comparison of its merits with those of Reynolds and Lawrence; but a few preliminary remarks ought to be set down here, always bearing in mind that a work like this periodical is not intended for the artists alone, but for the instruction and amusement

of the public at large. Every one who takes the trouble to reflect, must perceive that all faces contain two points of view, where the character is more or less developed,—a profile, and what is termed a front view,—and that the seat of a strong likeness lies sometimes in one greater than in the other. They must also perceive, that what is called a three-quarter view of the head gives the artist an opportunity of representing both; independent of which advantage, it has a greater variety in the forms, and gives an opportunity for introducing a greater breadth of light and shade, and also of showing the ear, which is often a beautiful feature. There are also a few fixed points which no circumstance can very materially change—viz., the temporal bones which define the forehead, the orbits of the eyes, and the bone of the nose. Having these things in recollection, we perceive Vandyke not only most careful in placing the several features in their places, but most attentive to the line of the profile, both in respect to its outline and the delicacies of its shade, and in giving it its projections and receding: nor is it ever lost sight of, even in a front view. There are other peculiarities in his heads which he carefully attended to,—such as the point of the nose, both in the cartilage which divides the nostrils, and the flatness above them;

also the marking at the corners of the mouth. Dismissing any more technicalities for the present, we hasten on to more general matters.

One of the greatest obstacles the portrait painter has to contend with, is the absurdity of those deviations which fashion introduces, to the utter disfigurement of the countenance, and often complete alteration of the likeness; and what looks dignified in one age, looks ridiculous in the next; the fulness and natural cast of the hair in the time of Vandyke enabled him so to dispose and arrange it to the best advantage in setting off the features, that his portraits, particularly his etchings, have become models of study to all succeeding painters, for the elegance with which the hair unites and composes with the several portions of the face; we may also notice the great skill with which he mixes it in shade and colour with the background, so as to give the mask its full brilliancy and superiority over other portions of the picture. The reign of Charles II., that succeeded, as if to outdo the natural fulness of the cavaliers, surrounded the countenance with so overwhelming a profusion of artificial curls that defied the skill of Lely and Sir Godfrey Kneller to prevent it from being ridiculous, and prevents their works from having that share of praise which they would otherwise be entitled to. The head-

dress of the ladies retained for a longer period a more natural appearance, but the reign of Anne was witness to the most preposterous attempts to disfigure the "human face divine." Addison, with his usual humour, mentions, "that in his time, the ladies' head-dresses rose and fell above thirty degrees;" and some of his acquaintance measured seven feet, notwithstanding Nature owned but five feet eight of the proportion; and afterwards concludes with a piece of moral advice, which, if it had been followed, would have enabled the artists of that age to have handed them down to us in a much more natural and beautiful manner: though our fair countrywomen may consider it superfluous at present, yet, as it is of the utmost importance to the fame of the portrait painter, we will transcribe it, that they may bear it in mind; he says, "I would desire the fair sex to consider how impossible it is for them to add anything that can be ornamental to what is already the master-piece of nature; the head has the most beautiful appearance as well as the highest station in a human figure. Nature has laid out all her art in beautifying the face; she has touched it with vermilion, planted in it a double row of ivory, made it the seat of smiles and blushes, lighted it up and enlivened it with the brightness of the eyes, hung it on each side with curious organs

of sense, given it airs and graces than cannot be described, and surrounded it with such a flowing shade of hair, as sets all its beauties in the most agreeable light; in short, she seems to have designed the head as the cupola to the most glorious of her works; and when we load it with such a pile of supernumerary ornaments, we destroy the symmetry of the human figure, and foolishly contrive to call off the eye from real and great beauties, to childish gewgaws, ribands, and bone-lace." After the time of Vandyke, except Dobson in oil, and Cooper in miniature painting, we find little to interest us in the investigation of this subject; for though the talents of Lely and Kneller kept in the embers of the "dying" art, which the Revolution had nearly extinguished, and though Jervas drove his carriage and four, which proved that there was no want of encouragement in this branch of painting, yet nothing was achieved to the glory of the art till Reynolds appeared on the stage. That no encouragement was given to other works during that period must be ascribed in some measure to the want of capacity in the artists. Johnson ascribes it to another cause: —"That the painters find no encouragement among the English for many other works than portraits has been imputed to national selfishness; 'tis vain," says the satirist, "to set before any Englishman the

scenes of landscapes, or the heroes of history; nature and antiquity are nothing in his eye; he has no value but for himself, nor desires any copy but of his own form. Whoever is delighted with his own picture must derive his pleasure from the pleasure of another. Every man is always present to himself, and has, therefore, little need of his own resemblance, nor can desire it but for the sake of those whom he loves, and by whom he hopes to be remembered: this use of the art is a natural and reasonable consequence of affection, and though, like other human actions, it is often complicated with pride, yet such pride is more laudable than that by which palaces are covered with pictures, that, however excellent, neither imply the owner's virtue nor excite it. Genius is chiefly exerted in historical pictures, and the art of the painter of portraits is often lost in the obscurity of his subjects; but it is in painting as in life: what is greatest is not always best. I should grieve to see Reynolds transfer to heroes and to goddesses, to empty splendour and to airy fiction, that art which is now employed in diffusing friendship, in reviving tenderness, in quickening the affections of the absent, and continuing the presence of the dead."

PORTRAIT PAINTING IN ENGLAND,

WITH THE COMPARATIVE MERITS OF

VANDYKE, REYNOLDS, AND LAWRENCE.

PART II.

REYNOLDS must always be considered as the great founder of the English school of painting. The good seed which Vandyke had sown produced little, until cultivated by the genius of Sir Joshua Reynolds, for both Lely and Kneller must be considered of foreign growth, notwithstanding their admiration and imitation of the works of the pupil of Rubens. The education of Reynolds fortunately fitted him for achieving what his predecessors had never so much as dreamt of—the reducing the art to a system of some certainty, and combining the inward powers of reasoning with the outward capabilities of sight. The "Treatise on Painting" by Richardson, falling into his hands when a boy, influenced his mind, and formed within him those principles which he never after lost sight of; so much so, that many of his

lectures, delivered in the Royal Academy, contain little more than the same theories put in more elegant and connected language. Walpole, speaking of Richardson, says, "It is surprising that a man who could write so well, painted so indifferently." But Walpole, like many others, speaks of the art without reflecting that the power of painting entirely depends upon the peculiar construction of the visual organ; and all the education that can be derived from the most correct theory will never enable a person either to colour well, or even measure distances with exactness. The pen of Richardson, like that of the late Mr. Fuseli, was guided by the inward eye of the mind: their pencils were guided by the outward sense. Happily for Reynolds, his physical powers enabled him to combine the excellences of both, and produce works capable of competing with the greatest colourists of Venice and Italy. Another fortunate circumstance in the education of Reynolds, was his master, Hudson, being in possession of a capital collection of the etchings of Rembrandt—for any one comparing the works of Reynolds with those of Rembrandt, will perceive how much he is indebted to the great master of effect for many of his best qualities; indeed, his style seems founded entirely upon the principles which pervade the pictures of Correggio and Rem-

brandt — viz., a great breadth, and softness, from large portions of the objects melting into the background and shadows; an extension of form, by the dark side of an object being carried out by a still darker shadow; and in the light masses, by light objects and colours, which are prevented from being insipid by the light sometimes coming into contact with deep fissures of dark, and some small touches of light or colour, in the shadow side of the picture. There is another peculiarity in Rembrandt, which, if it could be explained without a reference to his works, would give an insight into what Reynolds must have discovered in contemplating his etchings when a pupil, as he has carried it into his finest pictures. When we examine a copy from one of Rembrandt's etchings, we perceive a monotonous assemblage of thin, wiry lines, which give a meagre and dry effect; but on reference to the original, we find the whole conduct of the work stamped with a completely different character; we find the lights marked with a thin, sharp line, and hatched down with strokes, which give it sharpness and brilliancy without destroying its breadth; but in the shadows, and along the forms of the several objects, we perceive clots of dark burr, strong, but not edgy, for the body of the ink is so great that the oil contained in it has spread on each side, so as to give it softness

and richness; the burr also stands up from the surface, filling the eye with a juicy, voluptuous character. Now this is different from other prints; it is also unlike water-colour drawing, but looks more like a sketch with oil colour upon paper, drawn with asphaltum and black. Except to an artist, these outpourings and spreadings of the lines are looked upon as defects, neither could they be explained, so as to give a gratification, without long study; nevertheless, the works of Reynolds partake greatly of this character, which may be said "to be a stumbling-block to many," and, like the works of Homer, are only appreciated by those who understand him in the original. Even Hudson, who had so excellent a collection, was ignorant of their beauties; for on the return of Reynolds from Italy, when he began to put some of these very principles in practice, Hudson told him he did not think his pictures were so good as before he left. Reynolds evidently, in his studies abroad, had considered Correggio as the chief example on which to form his style, though Rembrandt, both as regards the subdued tone of colour, and the rich fulness of his vehicle, must have been always uppermost in his thoughts. The praise which he bestows upon Titian as a portrait painter, in his "Discourses," shows that he followed the advice which Rubens

had given to Vandyke and Velasquez, who described Titian as the father of portrait painting; and the low situation in which Reynolds places "the cold painter of portraits," in drawing a comparison between this branch of the art and the other departments, evinces his anxiety to combine something of a pictorial air with the representations of his sitters; indeed, one of the first whole-lengths he exhibited on his return was his patron, Captain Keppel, walking on the sea-shore, with a ship foundering in the distance. This seems to have aroused the lethargy of those who, having painted the head, left the other portions as the assigned province of their assistants and lay figure. The next step towards reformation was his declared enmity to light and leaden-coloured backgrounds; and in place of considering it an advantage to represent "a figure as if the spectator could walk round it," he surrounded his portraits with a ground of intense depth, warmth, and richness of effect; these qualities combined, deprived his competitors of further employment, and filled his painting-room with all the rank and beauty of the land. Those who remained in the field were only enabled to do so by adopting his principles; and the "Romney faction" would never have been heard of, if Reynolds had not exhibited the art of combining the richest

colouring with the greatest depth of light and shade. To enter minutely, so as to give the comparative merits of the three artists in question with anything like clearness, we must always suppose a certain knowledge in the reader, for the truth of an assertion can only be proved by previous or after observation; this, therefore, must be our excuse when using too technical a mode of reasoning.

While this essay was in preparation, we happened to be in the vicinity of Blenheim, and as the Duke of Marlborough possesses some of the works of Vandyke, Kneller, Hudson, and Reynolds, it will, perhaps, answer the purpose of our investigation by making a few remarks upon these pictures: at all events it will break, in some measure, the monotony of reasoning without examples being given. There is a very excellent painting by Lely, of two ladies, half-length; but as the proportions taken in, and the mode of uniting the figures with the ground, seem so much like an imitation of Vandyke, it offers little for remark; we will therefore commence with the portrait of the 'Great Duke,' by Kneller, in the library. The artist has evidently endeavoured to do his best, and in many respects it is excellent: the figure stands well, the action is good, and the whole attitude and manner in which he grasps his baton are worthy of Velasquez; but here the resemblance

stops,—for when we think of Velasquez or Titian, it looks like a picture in distemper. He is dressed in the armour of the time of Charles I., with high buff boots, and a red mantle thrown over his left arm and trailing on the ground; in short, with every advantage to make a fine work of art; but the want of scientific principles is very apparent;—the mantle looks meagre, and has no union with the ground, so as to give it breadth and richness of effect; the armour looks cold and leaden, and is rendered more so by his standing beside a table covered with a slate-coloured cloth; to crown all, his head is adorned with an immense artificial curled wig, worthy of the best time of Queen Anne,—which gives the whole a very grotesque and ludicrous appearance. This attempt at blending the antique with the familiar, reminds one of the arrest of Alexander the Great by a common thief-taker, in Hogarth's print of 'Southwark Fair,' or the statue of Sir Cloudesly Shovel in Westminster Abbey, where he lies at full length in Roman armour, with a large curled modern wig flowing over his shoulders. The companion to this of Kneller is a portrait of the 'Duchess,' by Hudson: she also is standing by a table covered with a slate-coloured cloth; and this is the more offensive as she is in a rich brocade dress, which seems to demand a mass of shade of something of the same tint, as a

means of union or repose; it is rendered still more so by the table being immediately under a cold, grey sky. Every artist knows the value of bringing the near object in contact with the most distant, and also of keeping the one of a retiring tint opposed to colour which has the property of advancing. Now had the table-cover or the background been almost of any other tone, it would have been of advantage to the general character of the picture; as it is, her Grace looks as if she had walked into the wrong frame.

When we reflect on the want of reasoning which pervades the conduct of many of the English artists' works at this period, we perceive the great debt due to Reynolds, for his constant attempt, both by his writings and his pictures, to reduce the science to something like certainty; the works of all the great colourists seem never to have been clearly understood until he reduced them to fixed principles; and his "Discourses" and notes upon Fresnoy furnish all students with the means of seeing and judging for themselves. He has proved that every picture must be conducted upon a winning and losing scheme, and that the portions of most consequence preserve their superiority, only by sacrificing every other part to their advantage. When we look upon a picture where this principle is not observed, it seems "like a house

filled with strife," where every inmate attempts to be master: and when we look upon such pictures as Hudson's and Ramsay's, and of those artists who preceded him, the brilliancy and force of the colours appear to have fled, and every part hastening to assume the sober garments of Quakers. It seems as if the contemplation of such works led Reynolds to take up his pen against insipidity: in his 44th note upon Fresnoy, he says, "I am no enemy to dark shadows. The general deficiency to be observed in the works of the painters of the last age, as well as indeed of many of the *present*, is feebleness of effect; they seem to be too much afraid of those *midnight* shadows, which alone give the power of nature, and without which a picture will appear like one wholly wanting solidity and strength. The lightest and gayest style requires this foil to give it force and brilliancy. There is another fault prevalent in modern painters—the predominance of a grey, leaden colour over the whole picture; this is more particularly remarked when their works hang in the same room with pictures well and powerfully coloured. These two deficiencies, the want of mellowness and warmth, are often imputed to the want of materials, as if we had not such good colours as those painters whose works we so much admire."

We will, however, leave the painters of the "last

age" quietly to rest, and also the library of Blenheim, for "metal more attractive," where even the great founder of the English school meets with his match; for in a room where hangs his great picture of the 'Marlborough Family,' hangs also the magnificent picture of 'Charles the First on a Dun Horse,' by Vandyke—a work that makes him look "every inch a king," and is well worth a pilgrimage to behold. It is curious to compare the two works as they now hang opposite each other,—and observe the superiority of colour over light and shade. Reynolds' work, though filled with warm tones in the shadows, and jutting boldly into the masses of light with broad brown slashes, which give it great firmness and softness, nevertheless looks too much in effect like a print from one of his own works. This seems to arise from the principal light being composed of a number of the figures being in white dresses, and though richly toned, so as to amalgamate with the hues of the flesh, and the light in the sky very much of the same colour, it looks a warm-coloured picture, yet without the presence of blue or red, sufficient to take from it the appearance of a bistre drawing; while in Vandyke's, the masses of warm and cold colour are laid out on a principle which overpowers everything the memory can think of as a match for it. It seems not unlike the general arrangement of

the 'Peter Martyr,' by Titian, the composition of the background running down from the top corner to the bottom in an angular direction, and, being landscape, is of brown and dull green tones, getting cooler as it emerges into a blue and grey sky, across which, and jutting through the middle of the picture, is a dun horse nearly in profile, with the lights of a yellowish tint, and the legs and mane black, and on which is placed a blue-black saddle-cloth. The king is in dark armour, which unites him with the horse by means of the mane, cloth, and sword-sheath, being of the same tone, while his long yellowish boots serve to focus the lights on the horse without dividing its body in two. The boot is also heightened in effect by a broad gilt stirrup and spur, while the head of the king shines like a bright star in the dull blue firmament. The warm lights of the figure are carried into the sky by a few light yellow openings in the clouds, and the dark side of the background focused by means of a little red drapery. We may also notice the legs of the horse, prevented from being harsh in effect by coming in contact with a background of the same hue. Imperfect as this criticism is,—and all criticisms must of necessity be so, without an accompanying sketch,—an artist will perceive the broad principles upon which the hot and cold hues of the picture are spread out,

which must always give a work a preponderance when brought in competition with one whose merits depend upon the force of *chiaro-scuro* alone. Indeed, Vandyke's own celebrated picture of 'Charles on the White Horse going under the Archway' would stand no chance in the comparison, inasmuch as the principal mass is made up of colourless light. But though the 'Marlborough Family' picture yields the palm, there are others of Sir Joshua's that would stand their ground in the presence of Vandyke's best coloured works, such as the portrait of the 'Marquis of Granby,' a whole-length with a horse, in the Queen's collection. This seems, in fact, a combination of the excellences of Titian and Rembrandt, with that peculiarity of substance which, in the works of Reynolds, never fails of filling the eye with satisfaction; indeed, in Blenheim, also, there are some of his works of the very highest class—such as the youthful portraits of the two 'Spensers,' as a girl and fortune-teller, which, for vivacity of colour and lightness of effect, is a perfect model for this department of the art; while the half-length of the 'Marquis of Tavistock,' with regard to the modelling of the features, the way in which the mask is detached from the background, and the subdued tone of the subordinate parts, is an example of the means by which a portrait may be elevated to

the highest situation in painting. In drawing a comparison between the merits of Vandyke and Reynolds, it must be always understood that it is with reference to portraiture alone; for the education Vandyke received in the school of Rubens, as an historical painter, places him in such a position, that it would be unjust, without making the greatest allowance for the disadvantages under which Sir Joshua laboured, both on account of his imperfect instruction, and his confining himself almost entirely to portrait painting: what he acquired was acquired by his own investigation. Speaking of his visit to the Vatican, he says, "I found myself in the midst of works executed upon principles with which I was unacquainted, and felt my ignorance, and stood abashed; all the indigested notions of painting which I had brought with me from England, where the art was in the lowest state it had ever been, (it could not be lower,) were to be totally done away with, and eradicated from my mind." Of his mode of study when abroad he has left us many hints, from which we can gather that it was more an investigation into the principles on which the great masters wrought, than in servilely copying particular works. What he seems constantly to have had in view was, the generalizing of and bringing the great works of Nature, Michael Angelo

and Raffaelle, to bear upon the most trifling parts of a picture, and thus ennobling, by largeness of form and breadth of light and shade, the meanest circumstance. His children possess all the sweetness of colour and peculiar archness of expression of Correggio's, who he has evidently taken as his model in this department of the art; while his portraits of men owe to Titian that dignity and consequence which were absent in the originals. His female portraits are more of his own creation, possessing a mixture of natural grace with a look of high breeding. That his style was relished on his first returning to England we very much doubt, since we see, even now, well-educated people more struck with the painting of a hand by Carlo Dolci, where all the folding and tinting of the skin are attended to, or with an eye by Denner, showing every hair in the eyelashes, than works filled with the highest qualities of the art. Indeed, Reynolds says himself, "I am now clearly of opinion that a relish for the higher excellences of the art is an acquired taste, which no man ever possessed without long cultivation and great labour and attention." The careful smoothness of Raphael Mengs could be comprehended, but the ingulfing masses of asphaltum and wax of Reynolds must have made many stare with doubt and amazement. We can

fancy Sir Joshua giving the same answer that Tintorett gave on a similar occasion—"I am a painter, not a dyer." How far he would have been required to modify his style, had he lived now, both as regards the likeness and greater degree of finish, will be more properly a question to be considered in comparing him with Sir Thomas Lawrence, who adopted an entirely different mode of painting; for though he was an enthusiastic admirer of Sir Joshua, Vandyke was the great object of his imitation; and he seems latterly to have laboured to combine the fidelity and careful finish of this great master with the spread of colour which has become a peculiar feature in the English schools, though often to the sacrifice of qualities of a much higher character.

PORTRAIT PAINTING IN ENGLAND,

WITH THE COMPARATIVE MERITS OF

VANDYKE, REYNOLDS, AND LAWRENCE.

PART III.

If the Arts were at the lowest ebb when Reynolds made his appearance, it was otherwise with the commencement of Sir Thomas Lawrence's career. Sir Joshua, by a long continued exhibition of excellent works, had not only created many powerful rivals, but had led the public into a situation not to be easily satisfied with mediocre talent. Peculiar circumstances, however, combined to bring Lawrence favourably forward, before he was of an age to comprehend the difficulties he had to contend with: possessed of a handsome person, and a dulcet delivery of speech, he was brought into company by his parents as a reciter of English poetry, and strongly gifted by nature with a genius for drawing, combined the more lucrative practice of drawing the portraits of his audience; from a commencement of

small likenesses in crayons, he gradually enlarged his works to the size of life, and substituted oil and canvas for coloured chalks and paper. When we reflect upon the gradual development of the talents of most artists under the theoretic guidance of a master, we cannot look upon those early pictures without a degree of wonder, as they possess many of the higher qualities of the art, an exquisite taste, and a boldness of handling which sets criticism at defiance. Had the demands upon him by his family been less, and his study been greater, we might have had no cause to regret the want of a regular education in the expanding of his powers; but urged on by the incitements to dispatch, he engendered many vices which clung to his works through his whole brilliant career, and operated as drawbacks to a more lasting and less meretricious style; and, though latterly he applied the most intense study to his pictures, they are still deficient in those qualities which the works of Vandyke and Reynolds possess. In drawing a comparison between these three artists, it is to be borne in mind that Vandyke received his instruction in the school of the greatest master of the mechanical part of the art that perhaps ever existed, and painted at a time when the dress and fashion were peculiarly adapted for the picturesque representation of his figures, and must have in many

instances engendered ideas conducive to the excellence of his works; compared with such transcendent advantages, the education of Reynolds was a blank. At seventeen, he was placed with Hudson, a man who knew little and taught less; and at twenty years of age commenced a painter of portraits, with merely a knowledge of mixing the colours. Farrington, the Royal Academician, in his memoirs of Reynolds, says, "he had real cause to lament the want of a better education in his profession. The basis of all superior art is ability in drawing the human figure, and knowledge of its anatomy. The valuable days of his youth, the season when it is best, if not alone, acquired, passed without his obtaining this, the most essential part of youthful study. The want of this acquirement he felt throughout his life; for, owing to this neglect, he never had professional strength to attempt to execute works which required great power of the hand over the form, without his exposing his deficiency." This inability to draw used to be the basis of an anecdote of another academician, Mr. Fuseli, who used to relate, "that Reynolds would cover the canvas with a number of chalk lines, good, bad, and indifferent, and afterwards obliterate all but the right ones; which his eye, having the power of measuring quantities and proportions, enabled him to do." How a work is

produced is of little moment, if it is well done when completed. On comparing his heads with those of Vandyke and Lawrence, the process is evidently different; for whereas these two artists drew in the features and minute parts, Reynolds leaves them pronounced, by his shaping them out with the large masses of lighter colour; there being no outline in nature but what is produced by a variety of tints coming in contact: Reynolds knew this, and practised it, to the utter discomfiture of other men besides Joseph Farrington. He even, in his second discourse, mentions expressly the advantage of the brush over the port-crayon. Without reference to the hints he received by the contemplation of the works of Gandy, of Exeter, who is said to have painted in the manner of Rembrandt, we can easily perceive that he depended mainly upon the brush for the commencement of his heads; and, like Vandyke, the operation of the chalk was confined to a few strokes. With Lawrence it was otherwise: having commenced his career with crayon drawing of a small size, he became dexterous in this mode of portraiture; and when he afterwards took to oil painting, his eye still retained the influence of early habits,—and even in his last works the first sitting used to be a careful drawing with chalk upon a canvas of a dull tint, so as to receive a few touches

of white. It used to be also his custom to make small drawings in black and red chalks of the heads of his friends or sitters, or indeed of any character which took his fancy; which, though it rendered him an elegant and correct draughtsman, nevertheless had a baneful influence upon his pictures, which was very perceivable in the exhibition of his works at the British Gallery: they not only looked like drawings in oil colour, but there was a littleness and prettiness in their appearance, as if the objects had been drawn from a diminishing mirror; while the exhibition of the works of Reynolds was one of the most magnificent and overpowering displays of the art ever brought together, and exemplified the complete triumph of breadth, and a subdued tone of colour, over every other mode of addressing the eye; nor was the substance and juicy vehicle with which they are painted, less conducive to the gratification of the cultivated taste. We must not, however, allow ourselves to be led away by the recollection of the effect produced by the works of Sir Joshua; but return to a more critical examination of those qualities on which such superiority is based. Those who have carefully examined the works of the great masters, which were either painted to be viewed at a little distance or to be placed in buildings of large dimensions, perceive a corresponding

character not only in the outline, but in the masses of light and dark, and colour: the limbs are large, and boldly stretch out from the trunk; the fingers of the hands are well separated and strongly marked; the features big, and well blocked out by broad shadows; in short, the inferior portions and secondary parts, of great dimensions compared with the principal. These are the characteristic marks of the giants of painting; while the works of common men are destitute of those excellences. In a work by an inferior artist, though the forms may be bulky, they are heavy, from their being feeble and trifling in the extension of their component parts; they are also of no effect, from the absence of deep indentations in the principal portions. In applying these ennobling properties and peculiarities of the grand style to the purposes of portrait painting, we perceive the great character is largeness: instead of pronouncing the smaller parts, the outer boundary lines are to be defined; in place of retaining the peculiarities of the pupil of the eye, for example, the bulk of the whole eye is to be given, and also the outer orbit, by the extension of shadow, and even that is to be carried out by means of its forming part of a composition, depending upon the adjoining arrangements of the hair for greater extension and completion. Reynolds seems at all times to have been fully

sensible of the importance of carrying those ennobling properties into his portraits. Speaking of the excellences of Titian, in his eleventh discourse, he says, "The excellence of portrait painting, and we may add, even the likeness, the character, and countenance, depend more upon the general effect produced by the painter than on the exact expression of the peculiarities or minute discrimination of the parts. The chief attention of the artist is, therefore, employed in planting the features in their proper places, which so much contributes to giving the effect and true impression of the whole." In another discourse, he speaks with more caution, but still with the conviction that portraiture can only be dignified by infusing into it properties borrowed from the great style.

In following up these remarks so as to make them more definite, when applied to the practice of the three artists under consideration, let a plaster cast of a head be held at a little distance, with the light falling full upon it,—the consequence will be that the features will appear faint and indistinct; but let it be turned so as to receive a breadth of shade, each feature will then receive its proper projection and consequence, and the whole mask will become bold and distinct: hence we perceive the influence of shadow in giving a work firmness, also in dignifying

it by imparting largeness; independent, however, of this property of shadow, we find that in nature the features possess a consequence and distinctness from their local colour, such as the darkness of the eye-brows or eyes, and the redness of the lips. Now, it is in uniting these two separate properties, so as to make them both conduce to one grand unity, that the artist shows his skill. If the local colour is forced too much, it looks unnatural and mean, such as we see in the representations in wax-work; and if shadow is carried to the other extreme, as we see it often in Caravaggio, Lanfranco, and in the works of the late Mr. Opie, it looks coarse and equally unnatural. In Vandyke's finest works, we find the union of these two properties in perfection; and hence we agree with Reynolds, who pronounces him, all things considered, as the greatest of portrait painters. Sir Joshua, in the treatment of his heads, depends more upon the effect of the chiaro-scuro for the result, blending the soft pearly shadows of Correggio with the transparent tones of Rembrandt, mixed with the sharp and decided forms of Titian. Sir Thomas Lawrence, on the contrary, seems to have depended more upon the resemblance and local colour of the individual parts for his likenesses; hence, though they are more life-like and intense, the features look mean and little: for the sake of

preserving a breadth of light in the whole mask, the darks of the eyes and hair look blacker than in nature, and the lips, especially of his women, look redder than life; and though a full red lip is the sign of health and beauty, and though great intenseness and individuality of character reside in the eye, yet we perceive, when these are overdone, the dignity of the art seems sacrificed to inferior sensations. The women of Vandyke look often stiff and formal, and less inviting than those of Reynolds: Sir Joshua's, though full of graceful beauty, yet possess a look of chaste dignity: while those of Lawrence, more beautiful than either, look more bewitching than modesty warrants. In writing, however, upon the personification of beauty, we must always bear in mind the influence of fashion upon the taste of the artist; and what is chaste in one reign may be considered prude and pedantic in the next; in all these changes the portrait painter is entangled; and his works, especially those of the English artists, may be consulted with as much certainty as any other mercurial gauge. The virtue and good taste of Charles I. had refined and sobered down to some authority the vulgar coarseness of his father's court; and the pencil of Vandyke portrayed those ladies, whose voluptuous manners, as the wives of Cavaliers, were held in check by the

scrutinizing eyes of the Puritans. Hence, we often see a coldness and formality in his female portraits, which is still more observable in Dobson's, who painted inferior classes. At the Restoration, the whole seemed changed, as if by enchantment: "Art (Cunningham observes, in his 'Life of Lely,') was no longer grave and devout, as under the first Charles. Loose attire, and looser looks, were demanded now; no one was so ready to comply as Sir Peter Lely, and, it must be confessed, that no other artist could have brought such skill and talent to the task." The sleepy eye, the long eyelashes, the pouting lips, and voluptuous exposures of Lely and Kneller, owe their existence to the reign of Charles II., who was more fitted for the keeper of a Persian Harem than a British Court. With the chaste Queen Charlotte came a different order of things; and the skill of Reynolds was required to give grace to the pomatumed pyramids of powdered hair, and that dignity which beauty acquires from appearing the preserver of its highest quality. Bacon says, "That is the best part of beauty which a picture cannot express; no, nor the first sight of the life." Sir Joshua seems to have laboured to represent this inward excellence; and we can fancy the grace and charms of his females will remain when their colour has fled. The early associations

of Lawrence combined to deprive his works of this inherent superiority; his women look too conscious of their attractions, and the feelings they inspire in the spectator are rarely of sufficient force to prevent him having an inclination to break the tenth commandment. Had Lawrence, like Reynolds, enjoyed the constant admonitions of a moralist such as Johnson, the superficial glozes engendered in youth might have been eradicated, and we should have witnessed their effect in his pictures. Leaving, however, these digressions, we shall address ourselves more to the practical part of the subject; yet not before admonishing the young artist, that painting, like poetry, is ennobled only by contributing to the purification of thought.

Reynolds seems always to have been of opinion that the likeness of a portrait consisted more in preserving the general effect of the countenance than in the most minute finishing of the features, or any of the particular parts; in his last sittings, this general effect was produced by glazing, and uniting in one tone all the breaks and interruptions of minute differences. Lawrence, on the contrary, laboured upon the drawing of each feature with the greatest finish and resemblance, imparting to the whole a refinement arising from his exquisite taste, still preserving great breadth, from the extreme delicacy with which the

subordinate markings are defined, and the depth and sharpness of his extreme darks. In the one mode we have softness and breadth, from the features being defined by means of shadow alone; in the other case, a littleness and anxiety about minute trifles. There is a manly character in the art which seems to disdain the curious intricacies of imperfect detail. While we are upon this point, we may notice more at large what we wish to express by the phrase of "mean termination to the features," mentioned in a former part of this essay. A little investigation will enable any one to perceive that Nature is seldom perfect in her works, but, like the blunt or obliterated cast from a mould, is often either indefinite, or blurred in some of the markings. The artist acquainted with her general conduct, on which the beauty of form depends, assists her in completing what accident may have rendered defective, at the same time guarding against too much precision and sharpness, which render the features equally mean and destitute of grandeur. When we reflect upon the varieties of character produced by the intermarriage of families, and the change the countenance undergoes, reviving the likeness of one branch and the other often through many generations, it will give some idea of the difficulty and danger of this department of the artist's labours in dignifying the portrait. Lawrence, though

one whose blandishments of the pencil were only equalled by those of the tongue, never lost sight of these qualities; nevertheless, his portraits, compared with Vandyke and Reynolds, lack the noble dignity of man. In the National Gallery we have three heads, which in an eminent degree show the peculiarities of the three artists—viz., the Gevartius, Lord Heathfield, and Mr. Angerstein. The Gevartius possesses individuality without littleness; Heathfield possesses grandeur without individuality; and Angerstein possesses individuality without grandeur. Yet Lawrence, when roused, was not without the capability of portraying the stern dignity of man; witness his portrait of Lord Liverpool, in the Waterloo Gallery at Windsor. Nor do his heads of the Pope, Castlereagh, and Humboldt, in the same room, give any one an idea that it would be an easy thing to paint as well. Sir Joshua himself could only succeed by substituting something else in lieu of what Lawrence has shown the ability to grapple with. While we are here, it may be worth observation to notice the difficulties Lawrence had to contend with. In passing through to the Gallery of Waterloo, we are ushered in previously to the Vandyke Gallery, where the costume and colour of the dresses do so much for the pictorial effect; whereas the coats and waistcoats of the present time are mean, from being

familiar, and are scanty in the material, which prevents the artist giving them either the character of drapery, or the advantage of light and shade. Even in Sir Joshua's time everything was more ample, and afforded more scope for pictorial purposes. Nevertheless, it must be allowed, when Lawrence possessed advantages in dress equally with Vandyke, such as the robes of the Garter, they are managed with less modesty and dignity, but tossed about too much, like what is termed stage effect; hence, often look meretricious: his George the Fourth is a striking example of this vice.

This Essay has already exceeded the limits we proposed, otherwise it would not be foreign to the purpose to enter into an investigation of the different vehicles and modes of painting pursued by these artists, as we see many of the colours of Reynolds have fled; and the pictures of Lawrence, though recently done, are becoming every day more flat. The mechanical part of the art may be treated of, perhaps, with more advantage, than when mixed up with theoretic discussion. In conclusion, we can only claim credit for having endeavoured to be guided solely by a love for truth in this inquiry, for it cannot be concealed, however melancholy and mortifying to reflect upon, that the art, like our literature, is losing its fine, rich, and bold character,

and becoming more insipid, as it becomes more precise. "Our ancestors (says Johnson) were studious to shorten their words, by throwing out often the vowels, and rejecting consonants likewise of a weaker sound, retaining the stronger, which seem the *bones* of words." In poetry and painting, we seem more anxious to leave out the bones. But though the art has gradually declined since the bright era of Michael Angelo and Raffaelle, there are geniuses which rise above the million with the luminous coruscations of a rocket, leaving at their departure a thousand brilliant sparks, which gradually die out. Vandyke, Reynolds, and Lawrence, were all of this description: the feeblest and last spark of Vandyke was Hudson: the most brilliant of Reynolds were Owen and Jackson; those of Lawrence are still glimmering.*

* Sir D. Wilkie, in his remarks on Portrait Painting, says: "No representations of female character have equalled in sweetness and beauty the female portraits of Sir Joshua Reynolds; yet a contemporary has remarked, that this was accomplished greatly at the expense of likeness. Hoppner, who was himself distinguished for the beauty with which he endowed the female form, remarked, that even to him it was a matter of surprise that Reynolds could send home portraits with so little resemblance to the originals. This, indeed, in his day occasioned portraits to be left on his hands, or turned to the wall, which, since the means of comparing resemblances have ceased, have blazed forth in all the splendour of grace and elegance, which the originals would have been envied for, had they ever possessed them. I may add to this, what is remarked of Sir Thomas Lawrence: his

likenesses were celebrated as the most successful of his time; yet no likenesses exalted so much or refined more upon the originals. He wished to seize the expression rather than copy the features. His attainment of likeness was most laborious: one distinguished person who favoured him with forty sittings for his head alone, declared he was the slowest painter he ever sat to, and he had sat to many."—*Vide* CUNNINGHAM'S *Life of Sir D. Wilkie.*

This distinguished person I believe was Sir Walter Scott. The picture was painted for his Majesty, and Lawrence was most anxious to make the picture the best of any painted from so celebrated a character. At other times, however, Sir Thomas was as dexterous with his pencils as other artists. I remember him mentioning that he painted the portrait of Curran, the celebrated Irish barrister, in one day; he came in the morning, remained to dinner, and left at dusk, or, as Lawrence expressed it, (quoting his favourite author,)

"From morn till noon,
From noon to dewy eve."

III.

THE TREATMENT OF PICTURES

OF

FANCY SUBJECTS, AND FAMILIAR LIFE.

In a former portion of this work we endeavoured to define the leading features and character of the historical or grand style of art; in this we shall attempt to explain, as briefly as possible, the best mode of treating subjects of familiar life—a class of works which comes more within the vortex of an English fire-side than any other, and has, therefore, met with greater encouragement. But though the subjects may be national, and peculiarly our own, yet the principles upon which the various works are most successfully conducted, are borrowed entirely from the contemplation of the best pictures of the Dutch school; for as it is to the eye alone that the works of this school principally are addressed, we naturally find the most effective mode of gratifying this sense; though often to the exclusion of every other requisite in art Reynolds observes, "A

market-woman with a hare in her hand, a man blowing a trumpet, or a boy blowing bubbles, a view of the inside or outside of a church, are the subjects of some of their most valuable pictures; but there is still (he adds) entertainment even in such pictures, however uninteresting their subjects; there is some pleasure in the contemplation of the truth of the imitation. But to a painter they afford likewise instruction in his profession; here he may learn the art of colouring and composition, a skilful management of light and shade, and indeed, all the mechanical parts of the art, as well as in any other school whatever. The same skill which is practised by Rubens and Titian in their large works is here exhibited, though on a smaller scale. Painters should go to the Dutch school to learn the art of painting, as they go to a grammar school to learn languages." But if a constant contemplation of their works is of advantage to all painters, to those who paint familiar subjects they are the sole groundwork and only sure test of their future progress: for though, in the higher departments of the art, light and shade, colouring, and the mode of handling the colours, are subordinate to the great essentials of action and expression, yet a liquid pencil, a sweetness of tint, and a facility of handling, are indispensable requisites in subjects of familiar life.

Rubens, the greatest master of his pencils that ever existed, may be considered the founder of the Dutch and Flemish schools; for though, both in Germany and in Holland, many artists had arrived at a purity of tint and transparency of colour, yet "the facile charm that seems to mock at toil," and liquid touch, which characterize these schools, emanated from his studio. This fascinating charm is to be seen in perfection in the works of Brower, Teniers, the Ostades, and indeed in all the contemporaries of the great original, whose example sheds its influence over all; for we find it also in the luminous landscapes of Cuyp, and in the dark recesses of Rembrandt; but as the Dutch school declined, this brilliancy faded to a leaden and heavy mode of colour. Yet even in the works of Rubens this attractive quality is not always to be perceived: in his earlier pictures he still retains the dryness of Otho Venius, and the harshness of the earlier German masters; as in the earlier works of Raffaelle we see the influence of Perugino: it was only when these great artists acquired a facility of execution, and a confidence in their own powers, that their genius developed itself. This luminous transparency Rubens seems to have imbibed in the study of the Venetian pictures, evidently painted over water-colour preparations, the most lucid and brilliant

style of painting; and though his works are commenced from the beginning in oil-colour, yet most of them, both of large and small dimensions, are upon panels prepared with whiting and size, sufficient to resist the oil: this imparts to his pictures great brilliancy, as water-colour reflects and refracts light, while oil absorbs and retains it; independent of which, chalk is indestructible, while flake-white and other oxides return partially to their metallic bases. By examining his sketches and unfinished studies, he appears to have gone over this ground with a vehicle, such as oil and varnish; and while wet, drawn in his subjects with dark brown, heightening the lights with white: this not only enables the brush to flow with ease, but gives a liquid softness to the touch. In many of the Dutch school we perceive this ground tinted: in Potter and Wouvermans, often of a buff colour; Ostade and Cuyp, of a yellow or cane-colour; and in De Hooge and Peter de Laer, dull brown. We have been thus particular in the commencement of the work, as the ground influences, in a great degree, its future appearance; as any one may perceive by painting over a chessboard, which in time will re-appear, though covered with several coatings. In sketching in the subject, the depth or tone of the colour, which is to form the shadows, must depend on the lightness or darkness

of the picture. In the works of Brower and the two Ostades, we find it approaching to burnt sienna, or bone brown; in Potter and Wouvermans, burnt sienna and black; while in Teniers it is often little warmer than raw umber; their shadows gradually getting richer and warmer, according to the general depth of their pictures. They seem, however, all to agree in keeping their darks transparent and thin, while the light portions are opaque and solid; and as the tone of their several works vary, so does the vehicle with which they paint: for, assuming drying oil and mastic varnish, mixed together, to be the substance used, Cuyp and Teniers have an excess of varnish, which enables their colours to stand up with a fine and sharp edge; while Ostade and Wouvermans use a more oily and unctuous mixture, giving thereby a greater softness to their works. The best mode is to have on the palette a little of different proportions, to be used according as the touch best represents the object to be imitated; but, whatever may be the vehicle used, no one can hope to compete with the cabinet pictures of the Dutch school, unless his colours are ground exceedingly fine; they not only will not give a sharp and precise touch, but they will not spread out under the brush with that enamel appearance which their colours possess: the oil with which they are ground, also,

ought to be fresh and limpid. In large historical works, this is of less moment; but in subjects of familiar life, which are generally painted small, and to be viewed close, this is indispensable; and the colours ought not only to be pure of themselves, but preserved pure in the working: if too much tortured, they invariably become muddy. From Rubens, down to the most inferior workman, we perceive this quality; and portions of colour, of endless variety, are heightened and freshened by touches pure from off the palette: nor is their dexterity and freedom of handling more wonderful than their harmony and breadth of tone; for we seldom see either their dark or light masses broke up by colour of a discordant hue, except when purposely introduced, when it tells with tenfold effect. From having been introduced into this country, either by Vandyke or others of the Flemish school, their colour may be supposed to be nearly the same as we have now in use: and being mostly earths are not liable to change,—viz., ultramarine, ivory-black, madder, and dark lake, Vandyke brown, burnt umber, raw umber, burnt sienna, raw sienna, Indian red, light red, brown ochre, yellow ochre, vermilion, Naples yellow, flake-white, with a few glazing colours, such as yellow lake, bone brown, asphaltum, &c.

The fewer colours a painter makes use of, the

greater command he will have over them, as the eye gets a more intimate knowledge of their properties and capabilities; and though, like the changes of bells, their combination will produce an endless variety of tone, their chemical effects are less liable to destroy the durability of each other. In going into an examination of the various manners, or style of the principal Dutch masters who have excelled as colourists, we ought to commence with the works of Brower, as they possess the most transparent and fascinating tones; great breadth and great truth, both as regards the local colour and touch of the pencil, so that the object appears to be moved on to the canvas with all the vividness and freshness of nature: but, as his pictures are little known in this country, we must content ourselves with noticing a few of the peculiarities of Teniers, Ostade, and Wouvermans, as we have in England many of their finest productions. Teniers was in small pieces, what both Tintoret and Rubens were in large—the most dexterous manager of his brush: his rapidity does not seem to have allowed him time to torture and render his tints muddy, but has spread them over his panel fresh and pure from his palette. His colour combines, and is rendered subservient to his effect of light and shade; for instance, if an out-door scene, the blue of his sky is never so strong as to destroy the breadth

of his light, but is merely dark enough to define his white and silvery clouds; nor do the lights or colour of his ground or trees ever interfere with the form or luminous character of his skies: the light, if in the darker portions of the picture, is seldom brighter than dull ochre, or if in lighter or more distant, Naples yellow, reduced with a little black, thus keeping the upper and lower part of the picture subservient to each other; for as the blue is of the most delicate tint, so is the green of the trees and ground seldom beyond what black and ochre would produce; by thus keeping the whole of his colours of the most indefinite tints, he preserves the utmost harmony over the picture; and as his landscapes are little more than backgrounds to his figures, it enables him to endow every touch he gives to them with the brilliancy and sharpness of nature. His vehicle assists in enabling him to produce this effect: in the shadows the colours are driven out with little more oil than what is necessary to make them flow, while in the lights each touch stands up with a sharp edge, such as this varnish would produce; it must have dried quick, as we see one touch cross another without disturbing it, and after the masses were laid in, which seems to have been his practice, the high lights and extreme darks are touched in with the greatest precision; we never perceive any pinte-

mento or alteration; if the touch did not express the object, he appears to have defined it and shaped it out by using a clean pencil; thus it is that his works are animated with the appearance of nature: his clouds float in air, his trees twitter with the rustling touch of the pencil, while his figures move over his panel with the vivacity of life. But though his works are of that character which "takes the reason prisoner" and sets criticism at defiance, they are to be studied wlth caution; his faults only can be imitated: flat brushes may give his broad touch and sharpness, small sables will give his precision; but without his matchless colour and dexterity of handling, the work will sink down only to a better sort of Birmingham ware.

Though Adrian Ostade and Teniers both had the advantage of the example and instruction of Brower, the one being his fellow student and the other his pupil, yet the pictures of Ostade more closely resemble in tone the sweetness and brilliancy of their great contemporary. The pictures of Ostade are conducted upon a totally different principle from those of Teniers. In the one we have all the freshness and touch arising from their being painted at once; in the other, from repeated glazings, often revived with fresh touching into, we have a fulness and richness of effect which nothing can surpass: in

the interior of his cottages, the light wall assumes a brightness of tone that makes it serve as a mass for the flesh colour of the heads and hands of his figures, while his draperies are toned up to the greatest depth with hot and cold hues, which give space and air to the whole picture: his works, however dark, are never heavy, but on the contrary, his lakes, blues, or greens, are pronounced with the greatest richness of colour. In contemplating the works of Teniers, you are captivated by the wonderful dexterity of the painter. Ostade never draws your attention from the subject to himself; you perceive his whole aim was to give the best imitation of the object to be represented: in Teniers, from his sharp and defined edges, everything looks newly purchased. In Ostade's pictures, the various articles introduced have all the bluntness and colour of things long in use, they are also in their proper situations; while we can see that the objects in Teniers' compositions are placed for the entire purpose of being painted. Their tastes, as regards colour, are not more dissimilar than they are when the forms are compared: the skies, buildings, figures, and draperies, are full of square and angular shapes in one master; and in the other, we find the same things rendered with a round, blunt style of drawing. Without carrying on the comparison further, we will now notice the

manner of Philip Wouverman, whose works often possess the fresh and feathery touch of Teniers, with the round, full, and pulpy effect observable in Ostade's pictures; this union of style is produced neither by the repeated glazings of the one, nor the flat washes of the other, but by a judicious mixture of sharp and soft handling: for the better explanation of our meaning, let us take one of his pictures painted on a buff-coloured ground. We perceive the sky laid in with firm colour in the lights, which prevents the ground shining through; while in the shadows and half tint of the clouds, a greater quantity of vehicle is made use of, which gives a transparency, from the influence of the colour of the panel: he seems then to have heightened the lights and reflections with yellow and red tints, so as to represent the prismatic effects of the light shining through various strata; and while the whole was wet, taken ultramarine and white upon the points of a large softener, and thrust it into the colour firmly where the blue of the sky was to be represented, and more gently upon the surface of the clouds, touching in portions with the lightest hand—a clean softener seems then to have been taken, to unite the several tints; after which a few touches of light give a precision and shape to the whole: this gives his skies that variety and fulness of effect observable in nature;

in parts the appearance of the light shining through; in other portions, the appearance of a delicate strata of cool grey floating over the surface; in fact, a mixture of what is termed glazing and scumbling, without being either: it gives his works, also, the appearance of the highest finish, as if stippled with the labour of a miniature. Now this mode of treatment is not confined to the sky; but we find it in his animals and figures, ay, even to the smallest face. His vehicle, though not so much charged with varnish as that of Teniers or Cuyp, is less oleaginous than that of Ostade and others; for we find in the transparent handling of his foregrounds, it is capable of defining single blades of grass: in works of this class, the vehicle with which the colours are mixed is of as much consequence as the fineness of the colours themselves; it is this that enables the artist to give the touch that best expresses the object: it is this which gives the colours their beauty and transparency, by keeping the particles separate from each other; and, independent of giving that full, juicy effect, it preserves them from the action of the atmosphere. Without a mixture of this kind, a work, even though often painted over, will in time become as flat and opaque as the wall of a room, in place of every year becoming more transparent and finished in its effect, from the repeated touching and tints

shining through each other. Without going further into this department of the subject, we have said sufficient to enable any one to investigate the works of Metzu, Terburg, or others of the Dutch school, the only school to learn this branch of the art; " and by a close examination of their works," Reynolds observes, " an artist may, in a few hours, make himself master of the principles on which they wrought, which cost them whole ages, and perhaps the experience of ages to ascertain." These few observations, however necessary to be known, can only assist the artist in the mechanical part of the subject,—the mental part must be his own work, drawn from his observation of nature and knowledge of the human mind; and here the English artist has a much more difficult task to perform. The Dutch pictures seldom embrace the varieties of action or expression, but are confined to brawls, merry-meetings, figures smoking, or playing at games of tric-trac; and where, if the general character is given, the colour or handling is never disturbed, by endeavouring to give a more intricate or correct definition of the passions; neither do their figures require to occupy that situation which a dramatic story or a complicated composition demands, but merely serve the purposes of an effect of light and shade, or a beauteous combination of colour. The inimitable works of Hogarth have

taught the English taste to be much more fastidious, by showing the extent to which this department is capable of being carried; and the invention is not only to be kept on the stretch, for a variety of character, but every incident that can illustrate and render the story effective. However appalling this combination may be to the young painter of subjects of familiar life, the works of Wilkie not only demonstrate the capability, but exemplify the best mode of uniting the dramatic invention of Hogarth with the rich colouring and delicate handling of Ostade and Teniers: he is more simple in his arrangement and plan of composition than Hogarth, while his expression is more refined, and his incidents higher wrought; such, for instance, as in the 'Distraining for Rent,'—where the boy draws the attention of his father, absorbed in the ruin which surrounds him, to the mother swooning, with her child slipping from her lap; or the woman, in the picture of the 'Chelsea Pensioners,' who, stretching over the gazette of the battle, scans the list of the killed with a countenance of wild affliction that proclaims the crying babe in her arms an orphan: these are the incidents that ennoble a work, and place it on a level with the great productions of the Italian school. Neither are the accessories which embellish and illustrate his story less attractive than those of the best Dutch

masters, but are given with all the finesse and beauty of colour, which theirs possess.—Since the appearance of the 'Village Politicians,' in 1805, the English school has made greater advances in this department of the art; and the invention and composition of the 'Rent Day,' with the admirable mode in which the whole story is told from beginning to end, is sufficient of itself to form a school of subjects in familiar life. It is not our usual practice to bring forward examples from living artists; but as this painter has in some measure gone into a larger and higher style of art, we consider as if a vacancy was left in this class of subjects: we can only, therefore, recommend the student to endeavour to fill it up, but this can only be done by subjecting a strength of intellect to a life of laborious study.*

Now that this eminent artist is no more, but exists only in the excellence of his works, it may not be without use and instruction to extend this Essay by a more minute detail of his practice; especially having been educated with him in the first four years of his studies in the Trustees' Academy of Edinburgh, and after arriving in London, in 1806, witnessed the progress of nearly every picture of familiar life which

* The above was written previous to the decease of Sir David Wilkie.

he painted; for even when engaged, he was always accessible when I visited him. Without entering too much into his earlier studies, it may be of advantage to notice a few characteristic points, as they never forsook him through life. He was always first on the stairs leading up to the Academy, (which was then held in St. James's Square,) anxious not to lose a moment of the hours of drawing; and this love of his art, paramount to all other gratifications, continued with him to the last, even when his success had put the means in his power of indulging relaxation and procuring amusement. When in the Academy, his intenseness attracted the notice of the more volatile students, who used to pelt him with small pills of soft bread; as he was one of the first to be present, so he was one of the last to depart. After Academy hours, which were from ten to twelve in the forenoon, (the best time of the day for application,) those who were apprentices returned to their several professions; but Wilkie invariably returned to his lodging, there to follow out what was begun in the Academy, by copying from his own hands and face in a mirror; thus, as it were, engrafting the great principles of the antique on the basis of nature. He soon became aware that, in telling a story, the action of the hands was as necessary as the action and expression of the features. The dexterity and

knowledge he thus acquired when young were of the utmost importance to him, when he carried out his pictures of familiar life, as he found it was impossible to get his models to give him either action or expression. To exemplify this observation, I may mention, that in his admirable picture of the 'Blind Fiddler,' now in the National Gallery, the hands of all the figures in action are from his own, as is also the expression of the heads; in fact, the girl leaning over the back of the chair is very like what he was at this time. The other heads requiring less mixed expression, were painted at once from the model, and exhibit more of Teniers' sharpness of touch, (the master he had in his eye at this time.) As the picture was painted for Sir George Beaumont, Sir George gave him a very fine specimen of this master, which used to be on his easel during its progress. Reverting to his studies of hands, his drawings are innumerable, and many of them possessing the character and grace of Raffaelle and Correggio. He generally made these studies in black and red chalk, heightened sometimes with white, such as we see in those of Watteau. I may observe, that he could sketch with the left, when drawing the right hand; and I have often observed, when using the same method, that the left hand sketches possessed greater character, being less mannered in the handling. While I am on this

subject, I may notice, we were always lectured on the necessity of paying the greatest attention to the drawing of the hands. Graham used to remind us, that Michael Angelo was great in defining the extremities.

Returning to the earlier days of Wilkie, I cannot omit mention of our excellent master, Mr. John Graham, who was most assiduous in his wish to make the Academy different from what it had been under former masters, who were bound down by the Trustees for the encouragement of Arts and Manufactures in Scotland, to make it a mere school for drawing designs for table-cloths and pottery. Graham first introduced painting in oil from the antique; and afterwards premiums for the best original pictures from history. Wilkie's first essays in the antique school were from 'The Niobe Daughters,' the size of the originals, in black and white; and his first pictures were 'Diana and Calista' and a 'Scene from Macbeth,' in both of which his close observation of nature was apparent, however inappropriate to the higher walks of art: in the one, 'Calista' was made to blush with so deep a colour in the ear and the upper part of the neck as gave Graham an opportunity (in deciding upon the merits of the several performances) for descanting on the difficulty of introducing the peculiarities of familiar

life into the higher branches of the art; the other was less exceptionable: it was in the scene where the murderers sent by Macbeth to the house of Macduff meet with his wife and child—the wife, and indeed every other part, was common-place, except the expression of the boy, who boldly answers their question; this was excellent, and Graham predicted that he would one day arrive at eminence, from his strong delineation of nature,—a prediction which he found verified, when a print from his picture of 'The Jew's Harp' was sent him, which he carried into the Academy to show the students, and to say how proud he felt in educating such a pupil.

On leaving the Academy, he returned into Fifeshire, and commenced portrait painting at five guineas a-piece. They exhibit nothing one could augur much from; but, latterly, on looking at some of them with him in London, he remarked it was excellent practice, and prevented an artist, who afterwards was to paint small heads and figures, from falling into a littleness of manner.

As many of the most interesting details of his life are related in Mr. Allan Cunningham's excellent Life of Sir David Wilkie, I must adhere to those matters that alone explain his principles and practice as an artist. One of his first pictures—viz., the 'Pitlassie Fair,' exhibits his great research into the expression

existing in the natural combinations and incidents of common life, in so correct and so graphic a manner, that many of the incidents represented in that picture were afterwards worked up into separate works, such as his 'Blind Fiddler,' 'Jew's Harp,' &c. This shows his power of thinking, before his knowledge of the principles of composition, light and shade, and colour, had clearly developed their properties. The pictures by the Flemish and Dutch masters, he had little opportunity of seeing in Scotland, and his knowledge of composition was picked up from the etchings of Ostade and Rembrandt, either in private collections, or occasionally seen at sales. I remember his bringing to the Academy one morning, the first study of his picture of the 'Village Politicians,' which created a great sensation amongst the students, and called forth the commendation of Mr. Graham. It differs very materially from the work of the same name, which established his fame in London. On seeing it, I could not but remark the introduction of several of the characters to be met with in the vicinity of Edinburgh, which struck me as a peculiarity in him, that while we were imitating the characters and mode of drawing to be seen in the works of Westall, Morland, and Julius Ibbetson, he was dodging and watching the natural incidents of the peasantry. I remember my brother James, who,

had he lived, would have been one of our first artists, (as he was certainly one of our first colourists,) describing to me similar investigations. He used to go round the various villages near Edinburgh, after dusk, and look in at the cottage windows to see how the inmates were engaged, unobserved by a stranger. This is the school which makes the true poet and painter, and what made Wilkie and Burns superior to all book-learned commentators.

In entering upon a critical examination of the works of Sir David Wilkie, it will be necessary to divide his style and practice into three different epochs,—viz., his first manner, when his style was founded on the Flemish and Dutch schools; next, his works after residing in Italy, and studying the great principles of the Venetian and Italian schools; and lastly, those pictures he painted in Spain, and after his return, when he engrafted on his subjects the manner of Velasquez and Murillo. In his first manner, I should class his 'Blind Fiddler,' his 'Rent Day,' 'The Letter of Introduction,' and his 'Chelsea Pensioners,' where he imitates the precision and sharpness of Teniers and Metzu, and also his 'Blind Man's Buff,' his 'Duncan Gray,' his 'Penny Wedding,' and those works that more nearly approach to the rich tones and glazings of Adrian Ostade. Though several of his early pictures were

painted on canvas, yet his general practice was to adopt a white-size ground upon panel, which was rendered less absorbent by rubbing it over with a little drying oil and turpentine. Before commencing his picture, he generally made a small sketch in oil, and varied it in several ways, in pen-and-ink drawings on paper, in some instances to an incredible number; and often, before beginning, would afterwards try the general look, when enlarged, by drawing it slightly on the back of the panel with white chalk. When he had at last made up his mind, he proceeded at once to paint the heads and hands from the life, as perfect as possible, in the first sitting, and even completing the principal parts, by repeated painting, while other portions were left without an outline. This method secured him the advantage of his ground, and the purity of his tints, which is not the case when the subject is sketched in at first, as the forms rarely are correct when going over them from the model. The vehicle used in his first manner was a mixture of drying oil and mastic varnish, varying the quantities of each according as he wished to touch sharp or full. In touching in the high lights, he generally took a clean pencil afterwards, to give them that mixture of precision and blending which they possessed in nature. In the pictures of Teniers we perceive this method of producing sharpness and

form resorted to; in his works, also, we observe a purity and cleanness of tint, and a dexterity in handling, which constitute a great portion of their charm. In Ostade's works, we observe a richness of tone, acquired by repeated glazings, and a roundness and melting of the outline, producing a luminous richness and fulness of effect. Wilkie's second manner attained these qualities; and in some of his works we see both excellences combined, such as his 'Chelsea Pensioners,' and others. In producing this combination, he always (in repeated glazings and repaintings, to get the richness of the flesh and the expression of the character) revived the pearly tints, and reserved his sharp touching to the last. This combination of styles must be carried on, however, from the beginning of the work, otherwise they will not unite—and a picture by Teniers, though glazed by Ostade himself, would not achieve the excellences of either. Some of Wilkie's own works are examples of this; as in after life, when his eye required a richness and fulness of effect, he seldom got an early picture into his possession without going over it, and as this enriching was not anticipated in the first instance, they were not capable of undergoing the treatment. I remember seeing one lately, the small picture of 'The Jew's Harp,' now in the possession of Colonel Wells, of Redleaf. Wilkie and the late

William Collins being on a visit at Redleaf, Wilkie got this small work on his easel, and went entirely over it with rich vehicle and glazing; the consequence was, that the delicate touching, sharpness, and silvery tones were entirely swallowed up in a flood of meguylp. As I had engraved it in its former state, I could scarcely recognise it as the original, and asked Mr. Wells's permission to take it to the window to ascertain the fact. These remarks will show that without preparing a picture in the first instance for glazing, as was the practice of many of the Venetians, it will either become vapid or undefined. As in his first manner he imitated Teniers, so in his second his eye led him into the richer tones of Adrian Ostade, whose colouring was entirely in another key. In Teniers, we find the pearly tints so very delicate in his figures, that his skies and landscape backgrounds seldom approach to either blue or green; his silvery clouds are broke up with very little hot and cold colours, and those of the tenderest quality; while his trees are often nothing more than a little ivory black and Naples yellow, in the most distant, and light ochre and raw umber in his darkest masses of the foreground and foliage. Not so in Ostade —the deep and rich glazings of his flesh required deep blues and greens in his skies and foliage, to prevent it being heavy, and give it the luminous cha-

racter of nature. Wilkie was perfectly aware of this mode of treatment, and carried it out with the greatest success. Sir Joshua Reynolds, when he used deep glazings, had recourse to the same means, and introduced intense blacks and shadows of the darkest touching; and to prevent these repeated glazings from being what is termed *horny*, used quantities of wax with his colour, which gives his flesh that pulpy substance which nature presents. Wilkie, in the first instance, used this vehicle sparingly; but latterly went as far as Reynolds, making allowance for the size of his heads: his 'John Knox Preaching,' and 'The King's entry into Holyrood House,' are specimens where he used it to the greatest extent. The way he applied it was, having it dissolved in a little turpentine, and mixing it as needed, with his oil and mastic varnish, on the palette; when skilfully used, it gives a quality to a work which nothing but the greatest labour can cope with. In the first instance, he painted the head firmly in, with very little vehicle, and when dry, went entirely over it with a full, transparent glazing, which gave it a substance and richness, over which he touched in his sharp darks and minute markings, and revived the grey tones of the half shadows, which gave the whole the appearance of having been painted over several times, though done at two sittings. Those who adopt this method

should use good drying oil with the varnish, otherwise the wax remains some time soft, and the sharp markings lose their ascendancy. In many of Rembrandt's works we perceive this peculiarity—seeing down, as it were, through stratas of colour to the surface of the panel, while floating on the liquid top is the handling of the detail. Although I do not imagine he made use of wax in his vehicle, yet we never perceive his pictures horny, which is the case in those of Dietricy and Eckhout, and many of his followers and pupils. The nearest approach to perfection in this fascinating quality is to be seen in the best works of Brower, whose colours seem floating in amber and honey, and evidently painted at once. I have never yet seen any good specimens of this master in England, but those who have visited the gallery at Munich will see that his standing so high as a colourist is due to him in the greatest degree. In entering the lists with these men, Wilkie was constantly examining their works, and during the season when the galleries were open, was to be seen at Cleveland House, Grosvenor House, and other collections of pictures, everywhere peering into the works of the Dutch and Flemish schools. I mention this, to show that he was above the conceit or folly of those artists who affect never to look at pictures; the consequence of such conduct is that they

have scarcely two ideas in their head, and go on till the public discover their barrenness. On the contrary, Wilkie often chose a similar subject with some celebrated artist, for the purpose of carrying out the idea in a more perfect manner: for example, his 'Letter of Introduction' is similar in composition to Mr. Hope's 'Terburg,' where a trumpeter waits for a letter an officer is writing; the arrangement is the same, and even the incident of the dog smelling at the stranger—but in Wilkie's work everything is treated with more natural force, and a finish surpassing many of the Dutch school, who are celebrated for this quality alone. In his earlier works, he made use of a small lay figure, not more than two feet in height, which was clothed with the dress he wished to paint. The drapery in this instance often had a greater simplicity, as consisting of fewer folds than when painting from a model of the size of life. The works of De Hooge, Jan Stein, and others of the Dutch school, convey the idea of their having adopted the same means. I may also notice a method which he availed himself of till the last,—that of having a small box made in the shape of the interior he intended to paint, into which was placed the entire group, modelled in clay, dried, and painted in a rough manner; this, when subjected to the light, introduced through a small opening in the side, in imitation of a window,

gave many hints for the arrangement of the light and shade, and suggested those varieties of reflections and half shadows existing in nature. The perspective of the whole was also more correct, as the point of distance was chosen sufficiently removed, so as to embrace the entire composition at once. Many who may notice these remarks will perhaps conclude that Wilkie, in familiar subjects, may be compared to Raffaelle, in the great compositions of Historical painting, and that he may be subjected to the same chilling critical expression, that he arrived at excellence not so much from his power of genius as his long study and application. But nothing great or lasting can be achieved without minute investigation into the works of Nature; and as we perceive the means she takes to produce the endless variety of effects, we are rendered more capable of imitating her—and I think it is Reynolds who observes, "that he will venture boldest out from shore who is most sure of his tackle." In noticing the various changes that took place in Wilkie's progress through life, we may remark that the alterations in his mode of painting were produced by the same causes that influenced the conduct of many of the greatest painters—the anxiety to produce the same results by a shorter road, and accomplish that in a week which in their outset required months to perform. Effective dex-

terity is only to be gained by long practice and perseverance, and those who have gone through the toil and labour necessary are entitled to reap the reward; besides, we should recollect that because a work is more slight, it does not necessarily follow that it is the less intrinsically finished. Breadth, amenity of colour, and effective chiaro-scuro,—the great charms of pictorial attraction,—are to be found in the works of A. Cuyp and Brower, as well as in the paintings of Vander Heyden and William Mieris. These remarks may appear irrelevant, but I notice the subject, as many have expressed a regret that he should ever have departed from his laborious and highly-finished manner.

We come now to the third and last manner of Wilkie, which was more strongly developed after his return from Italy and Spain. Those pictures he painted at Rome possess a greater severity of composition than his Spanish pictures, but they all tend to a breadth of colour and a largeness of composition. In his earlier works (as is the fault with many of the Dutch masters) the figures are too small for the interiors—such as his 'Blind Fiddler,' 'Blind Man's Buff,' &c.;—and in his later works, they fill up the canvas, as is the case with the figures of Raffaelle, especially in the composition of the Cartoons. He never aimed at the crackly texture of the Venetian masters,

but preferred the oleaginous appearance to be found in the works of Rembrandt and Reynolds. When at Rome, he seems to have endeavoured to combine the softness and rotundity of Correggio with the strength and severity of Raffaelle. While at Madrid, the works of Velasquez and Murillo seem to have been the models of his imitation: these artists, like himself, had begun with a meagre dryness and littleness of handling; and Murillo and Velasquez had, in their outset, painted common nature—witness 'The Water-Bearer' and the 'Bacchus crowned by Peasants' of the latter, and the 'Beggar Boys' of the former. The works of Titian existing in the Escurial evidently were the school in which both perfected their style: both in their later works had all the breadth of Titian, but a more loose and fresh mode of handling, from having less recourse to much glazing; or, at least, their pictures do not look as if they were prepared in the first instance so as to depend upon that process for completion, which was the practice of the Venetian school. In Velasquez's works you never find rotundity and heaviness, but they possess that flatness and edginess which give so much lightness of effect to the works of Teniers. Wilkie tried to imitate this quality in his later works to a high degree: I think the first picture he completed after his return from Spain was 'The Entry of George the Fourth into the

Palace of Holyrood.' It had been begun previously to his leaving England—all the centre figures were completely finished; what he worked on afterwards is like the execution of another artist: the first indicates all the littleness of finish and detail of the Dutch school; the other parts are painted with a full, broad, and flowing pencil. So convinced was he of the superiority of this manner, that his general advice to young artists was to put plenty of paint in their brushes, or as he expressed it, using the Scottish phrase, "tak a great stolhm."

While in Italy, Wilkie continually investigated into the principles upon which the several works were constructed. Titian and Correggio were his great authorities for colour, and he retained the conviction he always held of the necessity of warm shadows. In a letter of the late Mr. Phillips, this artist remarks—

"It was a great pleasure to me to visit the galleries of Rome and Florence with my lamented friend. Numerous and earnest were the conversations and friendly controversies we held on the wonderful and beautiful productions we saw. One of these controversies was, I remember, on the general tone of shade; I averring, with Mr. Hilton, that it was cool in colour, while Wilkie espoused the opposite view, and regarded it as warm. Another was a contest about the propriety or impropriety of placing warm

or cold colours in the front and principal groups of figures in pictures. Wilkie stated that it was a matter of indifference; I, that the most powerful and pleasing relief was gained by using warm colours in front."

And in one of his own letters from Parma, speaking of the 'Ascension of the Virgin,' by Correggio, he says—

"This is the most original of all the works I have seen of this great master. And here, I observe, hot shadows prevail, and not cold, as some with us would have it; this he has to a fault, making parts of his figures look like red-chalk drawings; but the sunny and dazzling effect of the whole may be attributed, perhaps, to this artifice. This, though painted to be seen from the body of the church, is, except for general effect, lost, unless seen near. Besides frescoes in various other churches, the public gallery here has five pictures by Correggio, of which three are of quality sufficient to form each the attraction of any collection; but the famous St. Jerome, (or The Day,) takes the lead: this, for force, richness, beauty, and expression, makes everything give way. Hundreds of copies have been made—but all poor, compared with the fearless glazings, the impasted bituminous shadows of this picture. Yet who that could paint like this would venture to exhibit at Somerset House!"

And in speaking of the 'Peter Martyr,' he remarks—

"The 'Peter Martyr' appears his best considered and most successful work; this, in its place, looks duller than it did in Paris. Oil pictures in churches suffer from lights coming in front of them, and this, besides, is much sunk in; but it is a work of great power. And here, if this be the standard, what a scale of colours! The whites are yellow, the blue sky is a green, and the green trees are the deepest brown. I have seen Ostade often on this scale; and if successful effect constitutes authority, how practically terrible is the tone of this great work—but how removed from the practice of modern times! 'The Miracle of St. Mark' is the great favourite with the artists; and for richness and depth of tone nothing could more effectually correct the errors now going than this masterpiece of Tintoretto. But this is mere technicality—the workshop of art; cleverness in the highest degree, but without sense or sentiment, and to all but the artist incomprehensible. On seeing 'The Assumption' a second time, it improves—besides being a strong, it is also an impressive picture. The great 'Crucifixion' of Tintoretto I have also seen: far more sketchy than I expected, being vigorous and clever in the extreme — the 'Taking of Seringapatam,' in Venetian art; but if

this is what English artists are to follow, then farewell to our influence on the public mind. Titian seems here lost and alone, in addressing himself to the thinking part of our nature; and I never felt more strongly the justness of the estimate Sir Joshua makes of Venetian art, as compared with the other schools of Italy. The rest seem merely ornamental painters. I cannot help observing, too, that for the decoration of apartments, the rich style of oil is too heavy—even Titian looks dull and black when expanded over the whole side of a room; fresco alone is suited for this—oil paint requires the gold frame."

During his residence in Rome, Wilkie painted several pictures possessing those qualities observable in the works around him; in like manner, when in Spain, the pictures executed at Madrid partake of the character of Velasquez and Murillo; he was particularly struck with the resemblance of the pictures by the former to many of the English school. Speaking of these great luminaries of the Spanish school, he remarks, that—

"These two great painters are remarkable for having lived in the same time, in the same school, painted from the same people, and of the same age, and yet to have formed two styles so different and opposite, that the most unlearned can scarcely mistake them: Murillo being all softness, while Velas-

quez is all sparkle and vivacity. To our English tastes, it is unnecessary to advocate the style of Velasquez. I know not if the remark be new, but we appear as if identified with him; and while I am in the two galleries at the Museum, half filled with his works, I can almost fancy myself among English pictures. Sir Joshua, Romney, and Raeburn, whether from imitation or instinct, seem powerfully imbued with his style; and some of our own time, even our landscape painters, seem to possess the same affinity. Nothing can be more captivating than the examples of his manner of painting here. The portraits, equestrian and otherwise, of Philip the Third and Fifth, the Duke d'Olivarez, and the little Infante Balthasar, with various portraits of children, decked out in the most fanciful and grotesque manner, are of the happiest effect; and such is his taste for the varieties of character, that there are here six portraits of dwarfs painted as if they were his most favourite subjects.

" Compared with Murillo, he has more intellect and expression, more to surprise and to captivate the artist. Still Murillo is a universal favourite, and perhaps suffers in the estimation of some only because all can admire him; but if he is in some qualities superior to Velasquez, and in design much inferior to the schools of Italy, yet for colour he gives

an abstract hue of nature, particularly in his flesh, that is much in the manner of Titian and Correggio."

Having now mentioned the three different styles of Wilkie, with their peculiarities, I may notice what are the most characteristic of these. The 'Blind Fiddler' and 'Chelsea Pensioners' belong to his first manner. 'The Highland Whisky Still,' in the collection of Sir Willoughby Gordon, and 'The Rabbit on the Wall,' are excellent specimens of his second style; and the most striking examples of his third are the Spanish pictures and 'The Columbus,' and also his 'John Knox Preaching.' Previous to his departure for the Holy Land, he commenced several pictures—'Knox administering the Sacrament,' in the possession of the Royal Academy of Scotland; and 'Samuel and Eli,' in the possession of James Hall, Esq.; but on examination of these, their treatment and manner of painting do not differ from those completed antecedent to them. What change might have taken place on his return, it is impossible to predict; but what he has done is sufficient to stamp him, all things considered, as the greatest artist of our time, and this we may safely rest assured of, that, like Rembrandt's, each succeeding century will conduce to raise his works in the estimation of all judges of excellence.

IV.

THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF OIL AND WATER-COLOUR PAINTING.

As a relief between our notices of the exhibitions of the Royal Academy and the Society of Painters in Water-Colours, we offer some remarks on the peculiarities which distinguish painting in oil and that in water-colours. We shall thus avoid the monotony that necessarily prevails in such catalogue criticisms; and, in the first year of our publication, it may be expected that something ought to be developed of our views upon the subject. To do which effectively, however, it will be requisite to take a little refreshing contemplation at home, in place of driving our readers from Trafalgar Square into Pall Mall East.

Every one who has investigated the history of the art, finds himself hurried on from the dry remains and fragments of Egyptian and Greek paintings, and even the Gothic, yet noble conceptions of the early Italian masters, until he is arrested on the floor

of the Sistine Chapel by the wonders of Michael Angelo, which unfold their gigantic beauties from the ceiling, and draw from him an acquiescence in the remark of the great restorer, "that oil painting was fit only for women and children." We here perceive the greatest delicacy and purity of colour, the chief characteristics of this style, embodying forth the most colossal and superhuman forms, and giving to the whole design a breadth of effect unattainable by the darkening process of oil painting. This freshness, this luminous property in fresco painting, is a charm which no water-colour drawing ought to be deprived of, and which no oil picture can contend with. The strongholds of oil painting lie in the deep-toned darks, and those juicy shadows where lighter half tints are seen floating half way down. The characteristic beauties of water-colour are in the pearly lights, and in those flat washes unattainable in oil-colour, without giving an inferior look to the whole work. This absence of heaviness, peculiar to water-colour, is found in a very high degree in the works of Michael Angelo, also in the frescoes of Raphael and Fra Bartolomeo, but whose oil pictures are hard, dry, and often feebly drawn. When we bear in mind the firm and deep indented outlines of Raphael in his figures on the walls of the Vatican, and the richness and grandeur of his colour, it re-

quires an effort of faith to believe many of his oil pictures to be of his pencil, or at least out of the trammels of Perugino. Until the time of Correggio and Titian, the peculiar beauties of oil painting were unknown. The power of representing the variety of textures and surfaces in nature, the art of giving to the light the means of reflecting back that luminous body unimpaired, and the conduct in the shadows so as to swallow up and absorb all reflection and refraction of light, were soon discovered to be its advantages over fresco, and Correggio and Giorgione availed themselves of such discovery; hence the impasto, and absence of oleaginous substances in the light portions of their pictures, and the unctuous and transparent properties in the shadow. The effect of such treatment can only now, in a manner, be guessed at, for though the lights remain, in a degree unaltered, the rich glazings of the shadows have become dried up and blistered by the effects of time and heat. We can easily imagine that the water-colour, in the first instance when the change took place, was not sufficiently charged with size, or some resisting fluid, so that, on the application of oil glazings, the work darkened in a very great degree; and though colours laid on in distemper, and glazed with oil pigments, will produce a much richer effect than either process separately, we trace a gradual approxima-

tion to the effect of water, or the luminous character of fresco painting, through the works of Titian, Tintorett, and Paul Veronese. The truth and force of nature produced by an union of the peculiar properties of the two modes, have been felt and acknowledged by all painters up to the present time; and though Rubens, who laid the foundation of the art in Germany, finished his works principally in oil, yet, from adopting a white water-colour ground, he preserved, in a high degree, the fresh and brilliant effects of the Venetian mode of painting; and by Velasquez it was carried into Spain, and by Vandyke into England, but gradually sunk into a leaden and dull arrangement of colour, until revived by the indefatigable exertions of Sir Joshua Reynolds. So anxious was this celebrated artist to combine the luminous qualities of the Venetian style with the rich transparencies of Correggio and Rembrandt, that half his life was spent in trying experiments on the various modes of producing this union, and which has occasioned the decay and destruction of many of his works; for though water-colour will support oil painting, yet, when washed over it so as to recover the freshness of the original ground, it contracts and tears the work to pieces; hence the deep and multifarious cracks and fissures in the background of most of his best coloured pictures. With Sir Joshua

and his associates, the fine qualities of painting retired; for though the elegant taste of Sir Thomas Lawrence, and the delicacy of his drawing, sustained the art in the high position it had been placed in, we search in vain to find in his works the distinctive qualities of oil painting. His high lights are but a succession of thin washes of light colour without solidity, while his shadows are cold and opaque. With the true feeling of an artist, he saw its superiority; but his style had been fixed in early life, and an overwhelming accumulation of work precluded all possibility of any material alteration: he tried glazing but on one picture—a head of Hart Davis—which, though rich in tone, got flat from a want of proper preparation. With the names of Owen and Jackson we must close our observations on this department of the art; in their pictures we perceive a complete union of the excellences found in the works of the great colourists. In landscape, Turner has revelled, through a long series of years, in all the charms to be found in every class of fine art—the pure, pearly tints of fresco, the rich, deep tones of oil painting, and the luminous characteristics of water-colour drawing, sometimes dark, sometimes light, sometimes hot, sometimes cold; something so tender in his tones, as if afraid to give more than the mere sensation of colour; at other times destroying,

with the fierceness of his prismatic pencil, every picture which comes near him, reminding us of the madman in Scripture, "who throws about firebrands, and cries, It is in sport!" In historical subjects, Etty stands out a giant in all that constitutes a well-coloured picture. In him we have the true Venetian crackly substance of water-colour, with the rich and transparent glazings of oil. We only regret that a patronage which, in his case, ought to be unbounded, does not enable him to bestow more time on the details of drawing and finish. Why should he and Hilton not be put upon the pension list of a country as well as Southey, Moore, and Campbell? Sir Robert Peel would gain credit for such a suggestion, nor could Hume object to the pittance. Painting, as well as poetry, is a great refiner of society. But to return to the subject. We find Wilkie has part of the quality for which we are contending in a very high degree: his pictures possess that peculiar stearine substance found in the works of Watteau, and which cost Reynolds a long life to acquire; but the other requisite is absent, the fresh water-colour look we find in Watteau; neither do we perceive the firmness of outline, nor the depth of shadow, never left out by Sir Joshua. We want to see that morbidezza quality of Correggio, to appreciate which no man knows better than Sir David.

Whoever has contemplated an oil picture with a

water-colour drawing as the shades of evening set in, must have remarked the gradual darkening of the oil colour, while the drawing continued to the last in a mass of broad light. The power, then, of retaining and giving back light is the peculiar property of water-colour, or rather of the paper, which ought, therefore, to be preserved at any sacrifice, as the artist has not the rich, pulpy, and unctuous glazings, to give in compensation for its absence. Whoever has witnessed a scene of Stanfield's or Roberts's rolled down in a theatre, must have observed a burst of light reflected from it through the whole house, while every countenance was lighted up with an expression of wonder. Scenery now becomes a source of attraction, and the rich dresses of the actors mingle in, forming a picture which reminds us of some of Paul Veronese's finest works. Now this change we owe to Turner. Notwithstanding all his extravagances, he it was who taught these artists, by his example, the art of arranging the hot and cold colours, so as to give distinctness and solidity, without cutting up and destroying the great breadth of light. And though both Roberts and Stanfield have quitted Covent Garden and old Drury, they have left behind artists who are following in the same track; and the dingy, black vulgarities of Richards, Capon, Greenwood, and Marchbanks, have disappeared—drops, set pieces, and wings

—ay, and the dull oily lamps that hung upon them, likewise, to give place to the luminous properties of size-colour and gas-light. Those who have contemplated the pure and indescribable colours of the frescoes of Italy, must look with horror on the oily black landscapes that disfigure the staircase in the British Museum, or the painted monsters on that of Hampton Court. Fresco is the great mine from whence the invaluable properties of water-colour must be dug, and he who neglects these for the sake of competing with the peculiarities of oil painting, throws aside the best means of representing nature. Until the Peace of 1815, few artists of the present day had an opportunity of viewing the fine works of art on the Continent; consequently, the purity of the Italian, or the gorgeous effects of the Venetian schools, remained as "a sealed book, or as a fountain shut up." And though the genius of Girtin and Turner did wonders in removing water-colour drawings from mere topographical achievements, it is only now that the capabilities of water-colour paintings are beginning to be perceived, and spread over England. The drawings of Lewis, Cattermole, Harding, and Hunt, show what can be done in effect, texture, and colour; and we shall regret if the introduction of so perishable a material as body colour, or a meretricious perversion of talent, for the sake of attracting applause, destroys all remains of simplicity and truth.

V.

COMPARATIVE MERITS OF LINE ENGRAVING AND MEZZOTINTO.

BEFORE proceeding to inquire into the present state of these branches of the art of engraving, it will be necessary to take a retrospective view of the art in general as practised in England. We will therefore commence with Line Engraving, being the most effective, the most comprehensive, and capable of producing the greatest variety. The soft, pulpy, and luminous character of flesh; the rigid, hard, and iron character of armour; the twittering, unsteady, and luxuriant foliage of trees, with the bright yet deep-toned colour of skies, have by this mode been rendered more happily than by any other style. We must always bear in mind that an engraving is not a copy of a picture,—it is a translation; and as a picture is possessed of three properties,—outline, light and shade, and colour,—no print can be a proper transfer unless something is given as an equivalent

for the last; hence the variety so pleasing and effective in line engraving. Every one is struck with the mode that Strange adopted to represent the softness and transparency of flesh: for colour in the shadows, nothing has approached his plates, either before or since his time. The brilliancy and freedom of the draperies of Sharp have laid the foundation for this department of the art in England, while the liquid, flowing line, exemplified in the water of the 'Battle of La Hogue,' the 'Ceyx and Alcyone,' and 'the Fishery' of Woolett, shut out as hopeless all other modes of execution.

Contemporary with these engravers lived the great founders of the English school of painting, Reynolds, West, and Wilson, men who rescued the art from the feeble hands of Pompea Battoni, Hayman, Hudson, and a host of ignorant imbeciles, into whose possession it had fallen, through a gradual decay, since the time of Vandyke and Dobson; consequently a vigour was infused into the engravings of the time by the example and advice of those painters from whose works they were taken. This splendour of style introduced into the art of engraving may also have arisen from greater attempts at local colour being now made; for in the prints of the Flemish school, though the graver was handled by the masterly hands of Bolswert, Vosterman, and Vischer, and

under the guidance of Rubens and Vandyke, we seldom see the colours of the picture given except where they contributed to the effect of the chiaro-scuro: on the contrary, as Reynolds remarks, blacks or dark blues were rendered often white, for the purpose of preventing the print being heavy in its effect, or keeping the lights of a good shape. Latterly, in the French school, when the arts were under the direction of Mignard, Vanloo, and Le Brun, we see local colour and variety of texture introduced into the prints of that period, but elaborated and rendered feeble by the monotonous width of the lines and want of richness in the general effect. We speak more particularly of the works of Nanteul, Drevet, and even Edelinck, for the boldness of execution of the Audrans and Le Bas are worthy of any school, and unlike the landscapes of Ballechou, and the figures of Wille: for though these are sufficiently open and flowing in the lines, yet they are without crispness, and leaden in their general appearance. At this time the art of engraving was in its infancy in England, so much so, that most of our prints were imported from the Continent: about this time appeared John Boydell, the engraver, afterwards Alderman Boydell, a name that ought to be held in high veneration by all the print-sellers of the United Kingdom; for though without

much talent himself, he had the sagacity to discover the talents of other men, and ultimately turned the art from an import trade to an export one. The respect in which he was held in his day may be guessed from the fact that perhaps he is the only printseller who ever was invited to the *recherché* dinners of the Royal Academy, and that at a time, too, when the Prince of Wales honoured them with his presence, and still more that his health was drank; for Burke, who was also present, wrote on a piece of paper and sent it up to the president, Sir Joshua Reynolds—"This end of the table, at which as there are many admirers of the art, there are many friends of yours, wish to drink an English tradesman, who patronizes the art better than the Grand Monarque of France,—Alderman Boydell, the commercial Mecænas." With all due respect for this excellent man, it would be well if we could end here; but we are compelled to follow up the history till a later period. Reverting, therefore, to the time when the Alderman began his career, we find the names of Chatelain, Vivares, and others in the market, all of whom he employed, and though loose and unfinished in their style, yet as the masters and instructors of the immortal Woolett, the father of English landscape engraving, they are worthy of honourable mention, for Woolett was one of the first whose ex-

cellent works turned the tide in favour of the artists of England; and it is curious to reflect that his first great work after Wilson—viz., the 'Niobe,' was undertaken for the price of forty guineas; Boydell afterwards increased it to sixty, which was comparatively nothing, as such a work in the present day would receive a thousand pounds as a remunerating price. We mention this circumstance, to show the difficulty of persuading people that anything can be done at home worthy to compete with foreign productions: the same remark will also apply to the pictures of Richard Wilson, many of whose works he engraved. The nobility and patrons of art being under the guidance of picture-dealers, this excellent painter was compelled to accept the office of librarian in the Royal Academy, to keep him out of the workhouse; while now one of his landscapes would produce a sum sufficient to purchase a comfortable annuity for life. These are melancholy reflections, but will always occur to those men whose genius, as Bacon says, "precedes the age in which they live." But to return to the subject: as English engraving began to be encouraged at home, and the troubles of France turned the attention of French connoisseurs to something more serious than copper-cutting, a new æra arose, and the wealth arising from the increase of our manufactures and the riches of our colonies

created a new class of purchasers. The laborious style of line engraving, though sufficient to supply the demand for the portfolios of the curious, was inadequate to the purposes of framing and domestic decoration; a more expeditious method was called into action, and hence arose that flood of dotted or stippled prints which overspread the country. They had this advantage too,—for as line engravings are not well adapted for colouring, this process, especially when printed in colours, was peculiarly fitted to represent drawings; and even in the Shakspere Gallery, a work undertaken expressly to benefit fine art in this country, though the excellent print of 'King Lear,' by Sharp, was sent out as a specimen, with others, it was found that a century would not be sufficient to complete the work, if done in line, nor could many artists be found capable of producing plates of sufficient merit: stippling was therefore called into action, and, as this mode includes large portions capable of being undertaken by mere mechanics, (in contradistinction to engravings in line,) the workshops of Facius, Thew, and Simon, were filled with assistants. It is a curious fact, and one that ought to be noticed here, that at this time the taste for wearing shoe-buckles went out of fashion, consequently the engravers and punchers of buckles were thrown out of employ; but it was

soon found that those who could punch holes in silver or brass, could also make holes upon copper, and these unemployed artisans were summoned from Birmingham to London, to engrave the backgrounds and draperies of dotted prints. This transition, though fortunate for the buckle-makers, was detrimental to the art of line engraving. The fact is not noticed to lower the art of dotted engraving in the estimation of the public, for this mode, when in the hands of such men as Hayward, is capable of the very highest achievements, witness his prints of Mrs. Siddons, as the 'Tragic Muse;' his 'Infant School of Painting;' his 'Cymon and Iphigenia,'—prints that are unrivalled by any style: indeed, many painters are of opinion that the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds have never been better rendered; and the masterly line engraving of John Hunter, by Sharp, conveys not so well his peculiar mode of painting: in fact, his softness, his breadth of light and shade, the melting in of his outline with the background, have been faithfully and successfully expressed by the numerous mezzotints, engraved after him by Smith, Ward, Reynolds, and others. And one cause which operated against the adoption of this style of engraving, in many instances, was the few good impressions it was capable of producing: for, as mezzotinto chiefly consists of a nap or *burr*, as it is termed,

raised on the surface of the copper, by means of being rocked over by an instrument in various directions, and which burr being scraped away, in the half-tints, and more effectually in the lights, so that they will not retain the ink, the process of printing very soon rubs down those small particles which stand up. The introduction of steel-plates, however, has entirely removed that disadvantage, and plates now, in place of being worn out by a hundred impressions, are capable of printing two or three thousand; but before entering upon the change which steel-plates have produced in the art of engraving in general, it will be necessary to mention the discontinuance of the dotted, or stippling mode of engraving, in many instances where it was peculiarly adapted for the purpose, and which has principally been effected by the discovery and employment of lithography.

Many drawing-books, and studies of heads in chalk, kept in constant employ engravers of stipple, such mode being peculiarly fitted to represent crayon drawings; but in place of making a drawing, afterwards to be imitated by a laborious process, the artist makes his drawing immediately upon the stone, which, being put into the lithographic press, is printed at once; so that you have not only the saving of the engraver's labours, but you have the

advantage of the original drawing; and the works by Harding, Nash, Haghe, Lane, and Prout, possess all the excellences of these artists. Portraits, and fine works of art must still remain untrenched upon, as the unsound appearance of lithography, and the constant danger of the stone breaking in the process of printing, preclude all likelihood of its ever being carried to any extent. Having now, in a cursory manner, come down to the introduction of steel-plates for the purposes of engraving, we shall inquire how it has affected engraving in the line manner. When it was found that large numbers could be struck off, works calculated for a large sale were commenced, of which the annuals form a very prominent class, and one that has absorbed for a time the first talent of the day; and as it was also found that not only a large number of impressions might be taken, but that the hardness of the metal permitted the highest degree of finish, these works gradually acquired a closeness in the lines, and a minuteness, which rendered it almost painful to look upon without a magnifying glass: the consequence was, the character of the engraving was lost, and good and bad artists were brought more upon a par. The public could not perceive the difference, and mediocre talent drove the first engravers out of the market, from its cheapness. This the publishers

were compelled to resort to, from the novelty of such publications dying away, and the heavy expense attending the getting of them up. They are gradually sinking, one by one, into oblivion,—the great swallower-up of wonders,—and have left a numerous class of line engravers, which their ephemeral success called into action, to turn their talents, if possible, into other channels, with their style frittered away, from minute work, their taste vitiated, and their hands unpractised to works of a larger and bolder character. Steel has, therefore, been highly detrimental to fine line prints of a large size, while it has been the means, in a very high degree, of fostering the art of mezzotinto engraving; but as there is no evil but may be turned to some advantage, we may hope to see a combination of line with mezzotinto which may ultimately prove beneficial to both. Looking over many of the prints of the last century, we perceive a monotony and want of texture and variety, which cannot be charged upon the mezzotinto prints of the present day: we have now more etching, and a mixture of dotting, which tends very materially to the enrichment of this mode of engraving. The peculiar quality of mezzotinto is softness, and subjects requiring this velvet-like quality are particularly adapted to this mode. Any one who has looked upon the fruit and flower pieces

by Richard Earlom after Van Huysem, in the Houghton Gallery, must allow that the downy texture of the peaches and grapes, and the thin, soft, petals of the flowers, were never surpassed by any mode of engraving, and we cannot but regret that the matchless pieces of Lance have never been transmitted to steel. Along with this property of softness, mezzotinto has the advantage of enabling the artist to give the imperceptible blendings of one tint into another, as in the case of portraiture; for, unless line engraving is particularly well managed, it becomes defective, in giving the various undulations of the countenance a false appearance: if too closely engraved, it looks mean and dry; if open, it gives a tattooed appearance; nor can the fine touches of the hair or eyelashes be defined in a mode where lines of a coarser nature take the attention; but in the hands of Doo, Robinson, or Watt, this difficulty vanishes, and line engraving stands out pre-eminent. This superiority is very striking, by comparing the portraits of the Duke of York by Doo, those of Sir Walter Scott and Mrs. Lister by Robinson, and the mezzotinto portrait of the Duke of Wellington by Cousins, which is allowed to be a triumph in this department of art. In the one case we have the lustrous, luminous character of flesh, with the firm character of bone, and

that variety which a coloured picture demands, when translated to black and white; in the other, we have nothing beyond the feeble wash of an Indian-ink drawing, and sky, face, and drapery but a lighter or darker degree of smoke. However, this defect of his material is now felt, by this distinguished artist, and a change in his style, so as to adapt it to a greater variety, keeps him still at the head of his class. One of his first prints that marked his superiority was the portrait of young Lambton, after Lawrence; and one of his last, which still keeps him in that situation, is his 'Siege of Saragossa,' after Wilkie; only with this difference, the rock on which the boy reclines is as soft in appearance as his velvet dress; whereas the gun which Palafox is pointing is iron itself, possessing all the hardness of metal, and this is achieved entirely by the introduction of line; yet even in this excellent print, the defect, or rather the incapacity of mezzotinto is apparent, for the bright, blue, sunny sky of Spain, which is heightened in the picture by the artist bringing the pink scarf of the heroine in contact, is rendered nugatory in effect, and a monotonous light fog is substituted. Notwithstanding, we do not despair of something being achieved which may remedy this imbecility for a time, for we can never lose hope of the taste in England returning, as it has done already in France, to the excellency of line

engraving. It, however, becomes a matter of inquiry, if mezzotinto is incompetent to render skies and the foliage of trees, why it is that landscapes, so long a favourite with English purchasers, should be now thrown out of the market: and this also may be an evil attributable to the introduction of the annuals,—for these not only engaged the talents of such men as Goodall, Smith, Wilmore, and others, to the total exclusion of the production of larger works, which strengthened the proverb, "out of sight, out of mind;" but the eye became very soon satisfied with the engravings of these artists, even on a small scale, and the English school of landscape engraving has been held in abeyance by the quick succession of such subjects as mezzotinto was calculated to produce; and these, having generally a story to recommend them, or being an incident connected with some passing event, ultimately changed the taste from the contemplation of the quietness of landscape scenery to a relish for something more pungent and in greater unison with the excited state of the country. The consequence is, that though Turner, certainly the greatest artist of the day for composition, has had several of his finest subjects engraved on a large scale, no publishers can yet be found to risk the purchase, and the works of Smith, Goodall, and others, pass from their studios into his closet to be

locked up until a "change comes o'er the minds of men." Another point in the comparison between the two styles, and we have done for the present,—and that is the want of surface and solidity in the high lights. Objects in nature that have the property of throwing back the lights, in a broad full manner, are those which project, and are of an unpolished texture; for though a river, for example, will take on a higher light than a chalk cliff, yet it will not have the same breadth, but will take on dark reflexes, on account of its smoothness; as polished silver is less luminous than what is termed frosted silver, which, instead of giving out the reflected light in one direction only, gives it out in every position. These properties were well known to the Venetian painters, who generally prepared their pictures with size-colour, which not only prevented the light passing through, but had, in a high degree, this luminous quality of refraction. Our best water-colour draughtsmen are well aware of this advantage, and endeavour, even with the rough scraping of a knife, to recover the luminous ground of the white paper; and even in sculpture, we perceive the same anxiety to give the pervading character of truth. Any one who contemplated the bust of Sir Jeffry Wyatville, by Sir Francis Chantrey, must feel the truth of our reasoning, and allow that it was the

nearest approach to the conversion of marble into the character of flesh since the days of Phidias, (always excepting the unfinished works of Michael Angelo;) for the polish in the busts of Roubilliac, and the sand-paper smoothnesses of Canova, are not nature, but the labours of a turner in ivory or some harder substance than flesh. The same treatment may be perceived in the pictures of Rubens, who studied the Venetian process, which he communicated to his pupils. Witness the admirable portrait of Gevartius, in the National Gallery, by Vandyke. We see here the forehead and prominent parts very much impasted and glazed over with colour, which gives objects the properties of firmness and that luminous quality for which we are contending, while the receding parts are smooth and unctuous, and full of those qualities which have the property of retiring. We have been thus diffuse in stating these peculiarities, that we might perceive more closely the difference between the line engraving and mezzotinto, in rendering them. A line engraver expresses the luminous and prominent parts by a series of short *dots*, as if the lines were crossed by touches of white chalk, while in the shades and retiring portions his lines are smooth and undisturbed, thus giving the very quality required; while the mezzotinto engraver has nothing to substitute but the scraping away the

furred or rough coat of his ground which retains the ink, and giving emptiness in place of solidity, retiring qualities in his lights instead of projecting, and that appearance which puts good artists and bad upon an equality: but since mezzotinto has become the chief means of multiplying pictures, these deficiencies are beginning to be felt, and, as we predicted in the outset, the dotting and line engravers are called in to remedy the incapacity of mezzotinto engraving.

VI.

ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE FINE ARTS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

PART I.

THE total want of knowledge of the qualities which constitute Fine Art is remarkable, considering what has been done to improve the taste of the higher classes in this country. Upon no subject of general interest is so much nonsense spoken or written; nor is there the least hesitation in giving an opinion decidedly upon the matter, be it ever so intricate. The superficial instruction communicated to all classes upon painting, subjects the writer or declaimer to little chance of detection. In inquiring into a question of this magnitude, it will be necessary to take a retrospective view; and, perhaps, we cannot do better than commence with the state of the art in 1769, as in that year the first discourse upon Painting was delivered in the Royal Academy, wherein Sir Joshua Reynolds says—"There are, at this time, a greater number of excellent artists than

were ever known before, at one period, in this nation. There is a general desire among our nobility, to be distinguished as lovers and judges of the arts; there is a greater superfluity of wealth among the people to reward the professors; and, above all, we are patronized by a monarch, who, knowing the value of science and of elegance, thinks every art worthy of his notice that tends to soften and humanize the mind." After so handsome an eulogium upon all parties, something very beneficial to art and to the country was to be expected; yet how little will it bear the scrutiny of investigation. Have those founders of the Academy, by all their labours and instruction, ever produced an artist equal to themselves? Assuredly not: like mirrors, when they fall, they have produced a greater number, but their magnitude is gone. Neither was the taste of the nobility, nor the patronage of the people, a whit better than it is in our own time; Hogarth had to sell his pictures by raffle, and Wilson was obliged to retire into Wales, from its affording a cheaper living: so much for the discernment and patronage of the period. It was but the other day, the committee of the British Institution purchased a picture of Gainsborough's for eleven hundred guineas, and presented it to the National Gallery, as an example of excellence, and yet this very picture hung for

years in the artist's painting room without a purchaser, though the price was only fifty pounds. But while we censure the ignorance of former times, we cannot praise the taste or knowledge "of our own generation." Let us take the case of Sir David Wilkie, as an example: an artist who has founded a school of art unknown before in this or in any other country,—a combination of the invention of Hogarth with the pictorial excellences of Ostade and Teniers; yet this artist's works, on his coming to London in 1804, were exposed in a shop window, at Charing Cross, for a few pounds, and a work for which he could only receive fifteen guineas, was sold the other day for eight hundred. Do transactions such as these show the taste or discernment of the public? Lord Mansfield thought thirty pounds a large sum for the 'Village Politicians;' and Sir George Beaumont, as a kind act of patronage, gave him a commission to paint the picture of the 'Blind Fiddler,' and paid him fifty guineas for what would now bring a thousand at a public sale. It seems, therefore, a fair inference that a discerning public, or a patronizing nobility, are only shown when an artist's reputation makes it safe to encourage him; then also come out the laudations of the public press, with their astute display of critical lore. The besetting sin of this country is politics—

a subject which excludes every other, in a great degree, from consideration and acquirement: from the cradle to the coffin, the whole energies of life are employed in the struggle between the aristocracy and democracy for an extension of power, to the total exclusion of those refinements which tend to humanize the mind and embellish society. How often have we heard the amiable and eloquent President of the Royal Academy draw the attention of the public to the "still small voice" of Painting, unheeded amidst the bustle of political warfare. The annual exhibition of the Royal Academy could effect little during a period when the whole of Europe was engaged in deadly strife, and the "mailed Mars was sitting on his altar up to the ears in blood." But even then our manufactures, which enabled us to come out of this combined conflict as conquerors, received from its influence a superiority of design; for, as it is observed by Reynolds, "An institution founded upon principles merely mercantile can never effect its own narrow purposes; but if the higher arts of design flourish, these inferior ends will be answered, of course." One disadvantage which operated against the artists of that period, and still shuts out the exertions of the present professors to a great extent, is the importation of pictures by the old masters.

During the Revolution of France, when property was rendered insecure by the inroads of lawless depredation, many works of art were clandestinely exported from Italy, Holland, and Spain, to agents in this country, which, in a short time, created a class of dealers whose interest it was to decry everything English, and enhance, by every means of deception, the importations of foreign art; of course, it was the interest of these dealers to throw every obstacle in the way of artists being consulted; and though the annual dinners of the Academy brought them in contact with the patrons and purchasers of pictures, yet fashion, and the weight of names rendered famous by time, overpowered every chance of competition. What operated to damp the career of modern art still tends to exclude the admission of newly-painted pictures, the dealers pronouncing the impossibility of fresh-coloured works amalgamating with the dark masters, without manifest injury to both. In portraiture this, in a great measure, was rendered nugatory; but, for a long period, the portraits of the nobility were painted in the dresses of the time of Vandyke and Titian, which kept them in some sort of harmony with the surrounding works of art, and gave them a consequence and an appearance of intrinsic value which otherwise they had no pretension to. Every means was used to impress

upon the nobility and patrons of art the ignorance and eccentricity of the generality of artists; nor was the literature of the day averse, any more than at present, to fix such stigma upon them; hence, from their being kept in the background, a Bœotian darkness overspread the country, from the prince to the peasant. It is, however, to be hoped that this state of things is gradually giving way to the movement from below, and the upper classes of society are becoming more enlightened upon subjects generally, so as to enable them to keep their station. While the provincial towns are striving with each other in establishing schools of design, we see no reason to despair, even in our day, of seeing professors of painting established in both Universities: it seems derogatory to common sense, that a science which opens up so large a field of gratification, both at home and abroad, should be allowed to lie dormant. Until something of the kind is acted upon, it is in vain to expect that the higher branches of art will either be appreciated or encouraged; neither can the public taste be properly directed to any useful or ornamental termination. What, for example, can be more ridiculous than the result of the deliberations of the committee collected to decide upon the Nelson Testimonial? In the first place, the very appointing of such persons precluded every artist of

spirit from competing or submitting his works to such a tribunal; yet the public press joined in reprobating the talent of the country for standing aloof. Did it never strike any of those noblemen or gentlemen that they were accepting a trust for which they were totally incompetent? Had they not the modesty to say, "We have been brought up in the army and navy, and can know nothing of the subject of sculpture or architecture"? Then why treat artists so contemptuously? It was modestly said by the chairman, that when they had decided, further subscriptions would pour in: we think the public are disposed to take better care of their money than to throw away any more upon so inappropriate a trophy for the "Hero of the Wooden Walls of Old England." Should, however, a sufficient sum be collected, we trust their names will be engraved upon the column, after the manner of the churchwardens, to show posterity to whom they are indebted for so original a thought; but, seriously, it is grievous to reflect upon the way in which everything connected with art is treated in this country. It is very modest in the President of the Academy to talk of painting making her demands upon the public attention by means of "a still, small voice;" but he knows, as well as most men, that a different enunciation is necessary to attract the attention of

even those who are disposed to listen. If ever anything is to be achieved in this country which will enable us to rank in refinement with many of the petty states of the Continent, artists must assume a more decided attitude, and the public press (the great flappers of Gulliver) must rouse the morbid apathy of inanition. The general cry is, that England has come out of the struggle like Samson, shorn of his locks: but if the storm, which has passed over Europe, has left us in so blighted a situation, we must rest contented for a time with that amount of praise which leads to privation. In referring to the taste of the people previous to the great war, which swallowed up every minor consideration in its vortex, we find but slight appreciation of those refinements in painting which mark the art as a science. Common-place representation of everything adapted to the meanest capacity, spread over the country, from the penny coloured print of the 'Farm-yard,' and the green and red plaster-of-Paris parrot, to the designs for the opera of 'The Maid of the Mill,' by Richards, and the refined prettinesses of Angelica Kauffman, whose draperies Fuseli used to designate, with an absence of all gallantry, "as a bundle of rags," combined with which were the coloured nudities of Cipriani and Bartolozzi, now to be seen only in houses of a low de-

scription. Compared with these, our prints of the present day, (from which, in a great measure, the taste of a people can be judged of,) are less vicious in every sense of the word, notwithstanding the importations from Paris of modern French engravings; nevertheless, a true relish for all that is good or valuable in art is totally absent; and works possessing the modest merit of truth stand little chance of being even looked at, much less of being patronized. Everything in the present day requires a certain forced expression to attract attention; the light and shade harsh and cutting, the colouring full of the extremes of hot and cold, and the outline extravagant and absurd. In one department we have a display of female beauty, with eyes preposterously large, and mouths ridiculously small; in another walk of art, subjects filled with the most mawkish sentiment; our landscapes bedecked with colours as if Nature was one universal flower-garden, and our portraits represented as if they were nearer the eye of the spectator than the frame which contains them; and why is all this overstrained execution, but to gratify the bad taste and ignorant gaze of an uneducated public? Nor is this ignorance confined to the lower classes: we find the patronage of the nobility, both in portraiture and in other works, often extended to painters unworthy of the

name of artists. To have produced this combination of evils, many things have conspired, a few of which it is our duty to notice. In the first place, the long war which followed upon the French Revolution engrossed every energy, to the entire exclusion of art, so that the good seed sown by Reynolds and his contemporaries fell upon barren ground; and though we can still perceive the influence of their style, stealing like a vein of pure metal through a mass of earthy matter, yet the excited state of society has engendered a character of art more in unison with its own feelings. The little attention paid to the instruction of youth, in matters of design, has prevented anything like taste taking root in the country, while the ignorant censure or injudicious praise bestowed upon works of art by the public press has completely mixed up, in one obscure jumble, artists good, bad, and indifferent: the people, therefore, naturally must remain stationary; for what is gained one year, is counteracted the next by a retrograde movement. And yet this is the people who talk largely, and abuse the *petit* character of their National Gallery: it certainly is of a *petit* character for a nation that has carried its victorious arms over half the globe, but in the very act of doing so, it has plunged itself into a debt of eight hundred millions; and the nobility, as if to keep pace with

the country, are mortgaged up to their knees in parchment; consequently, if the trustees of the Gallery come to Parliament for a few thousands, a hue and cry is raised about the state of the finances; and if a purchase is made, the needy state of the seller, and the love of making a job of everything in this country, oblige the nation to pay for it three times its value. Well might Mr. Wilkins, the architect, say, in his evidence before the House of Commons, that it would be fifty years before it was filled; and at the rate the trustees are moving, we think him correct; they expect, from time to time, bequests of pictures, and have received many, but for a great people to have an eleemosynary gallery is not very dignified. Well may artists complain that the Government has never done anything for the profession. There is not a single situation connected with Art that is filled by an artist; there has not been a purchase by the Government of a single modern work of art; nor have artists been consulted as to what would be of advantage, either to themselves as a body, or to the general taste of the country; and when artists see the very reverse of all this abroad, and the respect paid to the fine arts on the Continent, they have just cause of complaint; and they not only suffer all this neglect, but are abused by the press, for not having established an English

School of Painting, and for debauching the taste, in humouring the meretricious eye of an ignorant public. These gentlemen seem to forget that artists must live as well as themselves; and unless they move with the current of public taste, they must remain in a state of neglect and disappointment. In our next Essay we shall notice the remedies which have been instituted to remove this stigma from the country, and improve the knowledge of the people in everything relating to the Fine Arts, confining our remarks chiefly to the Royal Academy, the National Gallery, and the British Museum.

ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE FINE ARTS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

PART II.

In our last we noticed in a cursory manner the imperfect and changeable nature of everything connected with Art in this country. The impossibility of continuing in one uninterrupted stream of improvement either the arts of poetry or of painting, has at all times been perceived; and their ebbing and flowing have only been produced by the influential presence of eminent men. An Angelo and a Titian, a Rubens and a Reynolds, becoming the mighty movers of the spring-tides in painting. An Art requiring so many requisites to produce perfection in any one branch, necessarily extends the divisions which mark the intervals of its eminent professors; nor can we expect that an Academy, or any other nursery of education, can produce a greater succession: like other seedlings, a thousand may be reared, but to the experienced botanist, all alike

worthless. Yet it does not follow from that, that Academies are of no use; on the contrary, they give the greatest chance for the cultivation of genius, and enable it to carry out in after life the practical results imbibed from the classic fountains of Greece and Rome; when properly conducted, they become the great grammar-schools of painting, and unfold in the shortest space of time a knowledge of those beauties which lie hid in the antique sculpture. Whatever faults the Royal Academy may have in other matters, the education of youth has been conducted in the most exemplary manner, and the most perfect models of ancient art have at all times been placed before the students. Nor have the failures in producing many men of superior talent been altogether detrimental to the spread of art through the country, for the numberless failures in producing painters whose abilities were sufficiently great to live by the easel, have, nevertheless, furnished the manufacturing provinces with a better class of designers; for, as Reynolds observes, "Academies will always be surrounded with an atmosphere influenced by their existence,"—and even the common sign-posts exhibit sufficient marks to indicate the different eras of a Lely or a Lawrence. The annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy also contribute considerably to give a bias to the general taste of the people,

operating through the medium of the scenery of our theatres, the teachers of schools, and private pupils, and the mere assemblage and remarks of the public at large; also, in a very great degree, by the engraving and publishing those pictures which have attracted favourable notice in the exhibition. Nor do the pictures cease to exert their influence on the close of the Academy, but may be traced, like lawyers taking their western or northern circuit, through the different provincial exhibitions. Notwithstanding all these beneficial results, they are not without a considerable portion of deleterious matter, which, emanating from so large a body as the Royal Academy, is doubly pernicious; and any vice dignified by the example of Turner, Lawrence, or Wilkie, spreads like an infectious disease over the country, by means of a host of servile imitators, whose works possess nothing of a redeeming quality to counteract their injurious consequences. We can notice, too, a certain tacit compact entered into, which gives currency to principles agreeable to the whole body, that not only produce a harmonious uniformity, but tend to crush any attempt at a deviation from the general character of the pictures on the walls of the exhibition. Now, this seems to have been increasing ever since its foundation, so that if we could now introduce a few of Sir Joshua Reynolds' best works, they would look more

like the productions of Rembrandt than of one of the founders of the English school. It is to be hoped, however, that the reign of these coloured sweetmeats is drawing to a close, as already Kremlit's white, chrome yellow, iodine of mercury, and French blue, have been lavishly and freshly employed; and when things get to a head, a re-action generally takes place. Reynolds designates the Venetian school "the ornamental school," and has been blamed for using so contemptuous a phrase, but surely no one could be found fault with for designating the English as the "coloured school." If Time is to be the great glazer of these crudities, then the English are the only artists who paint for posterity; and if this state of things is to continue, then Titian, Velasquez, and Vandyke must be consigned to the "tomb of all the Capulets," for they have lived in vain; but we cannot altogether despond, when we see the works produced by many of the rising generation—young artists, as yet not disdaining to visit the National Gallery, and catch a tone of inspiration from the study of these powerful antidotes.

When we reflect that a school of painting is established in the Academy where the works of the old masters are copied by the students, we feel confident that they only depart from these models when they grow up to be exhibitors themselves, from a

conviction that they must conform to the general taste of the academicians, as the only chance of having their pictures well hung. Let us for a moment imagine that their works were to be hung up with those of Titian, Velasquez, Tintoretto, Paul Veronese, and even with some of Spagnoletto's, in place of the less substantial delicacies of the present day, they would appear as visions that were "melting into air, thin air," and that we had not the same materials to work with that these mighty masters were in possession of. But a little examination will show us that it was not the mere pigments which have given the vast superiority to their works. Any one who will run over the outlines of 'Peter Martyr,' or the 'Death of Abel,' by Titian, will perceive a boldness of conception, a greatness and continuity of form, partaking even of a Michael Angelo character. Let us look at the picturesque grouping, and magnificent masses of the mere light and shade of the miracle of St. Mark, by Tintoretto, or the extended combinations displayed by Paul Veronese, in his works of 'The Martyrdom of St. George' and the 'Marriage at Cana,' and we may then form some idea of the great groundworks on which these colourists spread out their schemes of chiaro-oscuro and colour. Compared with these, what have we on the walls of the Academy? Feeble emanations of timid concep-

tion, embodied forth in bits and portions of figures; clothed in undecided light and shade, and loaded with colours which they are unable to bear. We, however, must dissent from the opinions of such artists as Professor Waagen or Horace Vernet, that Academies have brought the state of the Fine Arts to this situation. The ignorance of the public who cannot distinguish good works from bad; the want of originality in the artists themselves, which makes them mere imitators of each other; and, above all, that superficial system of study which in process of time destroys the capacious grasp of the human mind—these are the causes which operate perniciously. Before leaving the Academy in the present notice, we must do justice to the great founder, Reynolds; not only in his giving to the students the result of his observations and long practice in his lectures, but in his own example: witness some of his finest works, such as his 'Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse,' his 'Count Ugolino,' and the witches in his 'Macbeth,' the ideas of which are all taken from Michael Angelo: the two first from the ceiling, and the last from the walls of the Sistine Chapel. Without entering into the question respecting the comparative importance of the Royal Academy and the National Gallery, as a means of improving the taste of the people, we consider the opinion of

the President, that the latter is to be considered more as a granary, or a hortus siccus of art, quite as one-sided as the opinion of Mr. Haydon, who considers the exhibitions of the Academy as injurious to the public taste. The influence which an Academy calls into active operation, either through the medium of its schools or its annual exhibitions, can only be effective when based upon those principles which exist in the works of the great masters; and the people are more likely to appreciate what is good in the moderns by having the means of a continual reference to the finest works of antiquity, both in sculpture and painting. Nevertheless, a national gallery, without concomitant circumstances, can accomplish but little; of which the gallery at Madrid, one of the first in Europe, is a striking example. Every one must be aware that walking through the most splendid library cannot advance learning; the names of the several authors, the number of their writings, or the years of their existence, may be acquired with little trouble; but no useful knowledge can accrue from such data. So it is with pictures. To be driven, like a flock of sheep, through the most splendid galleries, with the servants uttering forth the names of the subjects and the painters in the most monstrous and uncouth jargon, is little better than mere idleness. Pictures can only be useful in

improving the taste of the people, by permitting a careful contemplation of their beauties and defects: to enable people to do this, it is necessary to class and arrange the several schools, that their peculiarities may be perceived, for qualities that are admissible, and even to be praised in some styles, are detrimental in others; therefore, having works arranged so as to look interesting, may please and amuse the eye, but cannot be serviceable in improving the judgment. It is also of the highest importance that fine works should be so placed as to be attractive, and their beauties shown to the best advantage; otherwise they cannot produce those effects on the mind which can at all lead to beneficial results. Now, we are firmly of opinion, that unless all these matters are maturely considered and acted upon, our National Gallery must remain neither ornamental nor useful: the pictures are not many, neither many of the highest class; but were they the finest in Europe, the very colour of the walls would destroy their efficacy. Every artist who has watched the effects of time upon pictures, must have observed that pearly greys degenerate often into greenish and leaden tints, and yellow stone-colours preponderate in other instances: by painting the walls, therefore, of a dirty grey-green, this defect is heightened, to the utter ruin of the Claudes, and

other works of the same tone of colour; neither are the warm and dark pictures benefited by it, for they are rendered by the opposition black and inky, and the brilliancy of the lights is totally obliterated. The colouring of the walls, therefore, is a point of very great moment; for it not only deteriorates the pictures of the Gallery, and renders them less objects of admiration to the public, but leads many persons possessing valuable paintings to follow the same injurious principle, not doubting but that the directors of a great national institution are the best judges on this head. We might instance the Dulwich Gallery, as an example of the effect produced by a differently coloured wall; for, though the pictures are of an inferior class generally to those in the National Gallery, yet they look a great deal better, and simply owing to this circumstance: a reddish brown or warm chocolate colour renders the light pictures more luminous and delicate, and the dark ones less heavy, from harmonizing with many of the tones in the dark masses; as to rendering the general look of the apartments gloomy, it is absurd to offer such a remark in extenuation. Most pictures look best when surrounded by a space of dull colour: few artists paint with much light in their rooms, and most of the works of the Italian school were painted for situations where little light could reach them. In the

exhibitions of old masters at the British Gallery this year, though the very worst assemblage we have ever witnessed, Lord Francis Egerton's two Titians looked dirty and unfinished, and few could believe they were the same works that looked so splendid on the walls of Cleveland House. Now this arose, not from their being in bad company, but from their being hung in too strong a light. With many of the frames we might perhaps find the same fault as with the colour of the walls, that they do not show off the various works to advantage, but the works themselves have a strong claim on the few remarks we feel inclined to make. Every collection of pictures by celebrated masters must be considered as beneficial to the improvement of the public taste, and at the same time furnishing the students in painting with works to which they can refer as examples. At present, the directors do not seem to bear these things in view, but are more desirous of having specimens of the different schools, without reference to their utility. We hear artists strongly deprecate the purchase of the Raffaelle, the Salvator Rosa landscape, and other pictures, as being of little use either to the student or the public generally. Few of the pictures of Raffaelle can give any idea of his great power, and had he never painted anything better than the St. Catherine, (for which the directors paid

two thousand guineas,) he never would have acquired a first-rate reputation. When this country is in possession of the most glorious of his works, (those in the Vatican alone excepted,) why are they allowed to moulder on the walls of Hampton Court, useless and unproductive in their effects, when, if removed to the National Gallery, they would produce better results upon Art than the Elgin marbles, for which the nation paid thirty thousand pounds? A room could easily be built behind the Gallery, which would enable them to be lighted from above; as to their being "injured by the smoke of London," that is quite ideal: there was not the same anxiety about their preservation when they were allowed to remain in damp rooms for years, both at Whitehall and Buckingham Palace; and as to the decayed state of the one lately at the Foundling Hospital, but now in the National Gallery, 'The Murder of the Innocents,' being given as a proof, it is founded in error,—it being painted in turpentine colours, while those at Hampton Court are in water colour; but rather than forego the advantage they would be to the taste of the country, they could be covered with glass. Nothing ought to be permitted to stand in the way of what would be advantageous to a people who have done so much for the advantage of other nations. Before quitting the Gallery,

we must express our regret that, as a school of painting, it is suffered to remain without an artist to direct the labours of the pupils;—a school without a master must strike every one as a perfect anomaly: boys might possibly acquire a knowledge of Homer or Virgil, but the waste of time, and the best time in their lives, too, would be enormous compared with what would be acquired with a head to direct them. We are aware that a jealousy exists between the Royal Academy and the National Gallery, which, however, ought to be removed, as they both profess to be for the advantage of the public. We should like to see the keeper of the Academy in the Gallery upon the Friday and Saturday, especially as it is the only school where female pupils are admitted; this alone demands some such regulation. We have the same objection to the school for the drawing from the antique, in the British Museum, and which is considered as a probationary school for the Royal Academy: the idleness, the irrecoverable waste of time, and the fatal acquirement of a vicious or incorrect style of drawing, are perfect ruin in after life, and the profession is degraded by a host of imperfect artists let loose upon society. It is of no use for any government to purchase works of a high class, if they are not rendered effective upon the taste of

the country through the medium of correct instruction; and this can only be done by proper artists being appointed to convey tuition, without which it would be better to close up the various facilities which only tend to divert the youth from more certain results. The school of design projected by government, and now under the able direction of Mr. Dyce, may be the means of fostering a more ornamental mode of drawing, which may be made applicable to the various branches of manufacture: but we confess we cannot yet see the force of shutting out a knowledge of the human figure: to be able to draw, they must be able correctly to delineate any object, and however, in the school, the pupils may be kept in ignorance, they will attempt the figure at home, and ultimately become painters in spite of every obstacle. The same plan was tried for many years in the Trustees' Academy at Edinburgh, which afterwards became a mere school for general instruction in drawing. Taking the human figure as the groundwork of all design, it is well known that in many proportions in architecture and ornamental decoration, the Greeks formed their principles upon a contemplation of the proportions observable in the varieties of man. With these few remarks we must conclude for the present, but we

must at all times urge the attention of the government towards the decoration of our public buildings with works of an historical character, as the best means of bringing out the talent of our artists, and giving a decided character to the arts of the country generally.

ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE FINE ARTS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

PART III.

SEVEN years have elapsed since the first two Essays on this subject were written, and it is gratifying to notice that a gradual improvement has taken place in many of the departments to which they refer; for without supposing that any hints thrown out could have in the smallest degree influenced these beneficial changes, it is satisfactory to reflect that what has been descanted upon has been in accordance with the progression. The first to be noticed, as being of the greatest consequence, is the consideration given to the advancement of the art of painting by the government: until now the treasury drafts have been more especially issued for the encouragement of sculpture and architecture. On rebuilding the new Houses of Parliament, an opportunity presented itself of benefiting the higher departments of the art, and a Select Committee of the

House of Commons was appointed to take the matter into consideration. In extracting from the pages of the "Art Union" of September, 1841, we find a condensed notice of their first Report, of which, as it entirely coincides with our own views of the subject, we avail ourselves. It commences by stating that the committee have obtained the opinions of some very distinguished professors and admirers of Art, who are unanimous upon one point, —viz., that so important and national a work as the erection of the two Houses of Parliament affords an opportunity, which ought not to be neglected, of encouraging not only the higher but every subordinate branch of Fine Art in this country. In this opinion the committee concur, but at the same time they express a decided conviction that to accomplish this object successfully, a plan should, as soon as practicable, be laid down, according to which the architect and the artists to be employed should co-operate to this great end. At the present stage of the inquiry the details of such a plan could not be suggested, but a commission might with much advantage, be appointed to counsel and assist some department of the government, which should be charged with, and considered solely responsible for, the execution of such plan as might be ultimately adopted, as the best calculated to realize the pro-

posed object. But whether a commission be or be not appointed, the committee think it necessary that the advice of persons perfectly acquainted with the state of Art, at home and abroad, should be sought, for the better fulfilment of the purpose under consideration. During this investigation, the attention of the committee has been called to a branch of Art, but little known and practised in this country—viz., to fresco-painting. This method of painting has lately been revived on the Continent, especially at Munich, where it has been employed in the decoration of public buildings; for to public patronage alone must fresco-painting owe encouragement in any country: therefore, having carefully considered the evidence, the committee are disposed to recommend that this mode of painting be adopted, and they concur in an opinion expressed by Mr. Eastlake, in a valuable paper on the subject, which is appended to the evidence, that the nation possesses artists perfectly competent to realize the proposed objects, whose genius only requires for its development such an opportunity as is now offered by the decoration of the Houses of Parliament. It is suggested, however, in the event of this mode being adopted, that British artists not having had sufficient practice in fresco, it would be safe and judicious to afford them, in the first

instance, opportunities for some experimental efforts. The opinion alluded to, as expressed by Mr. Eastlake, is contained in the following passage:—"We should dwell on the fact, that the arts in England, under Henry the Third, in the thirteenth century, were as much advanced as in Italy itself; that our architecture was even more characteristic, and freer from classic influence; that sculpture, to judge from Wells Cathedral, bade fair to rival the contemporary efforts in Tuscany, and that our painting of the same period might fairly compete with that of Siena and Florence. Specimens of early English painting were lately to be seen,—some very important relics still exist on the walls of the edifices at Westminster. The undertaking now proposed, might be the more interesting, since, after a lapse of six centuries, it would renew the same style of decoration on the same spot. The painters employed in the time of Henry the Third were English; their names are preserved."—"The first conviction that should press upon us should be, that our own country and our own English feelings are sufficient to produce and foster a characteristic style of art; that, although we might share much of the spirit of the Germanic nations, this spirit would be modified, perhaps refined, by our peculiar habits; above all, we should entirely agree with the Germans in con-

cluding that we are as little in want of foreign artists to represent our history, and express our feelings, as of foreign soldiers to defend our liberties. Even the question of ability (although that ability is not doubted) is unimportant; for to trust to our own resources should be, under any circumstances, the only course. Ability, if wanting, would of necessity follow. In the arts, as in arms, discipline, practice, and opportunity are necessary to the acquisition of skill and confidence; in both, a beginning is to be made, and want of experience may occasion failure at first, but nothing could lead to failure in both more effectually than the absence of sympathy and moral support on the part of the country. Other nations, it may be observed, think their artists, whatever may be their real claims, the first in the world, and this partiality is unquestionably one of the chief causes of whatever excellence they attain. It is sometimes mortifying to find that foreigners are more just to English artists than the English themselves are. Many of our artists who have settled or occasionally painted in Italy, Germany, Russia, and even in France, have been highly esteemed and employed. The Germans, especially, are great admirers of English Art, and a picture by Wilkie has long graced the Gallery of Munich."

With respect to the cost of an extensive and well

devised plan for the public patronage and encouragement of art, the committee are aware that an impression is entertained by many that a large expenditure of public money for such a purpose would be wasteful; they are, however, of opinion, that all instances of the outlay of the public money for the purpose of forming or extending collections of works of art in this country have been directly productive of new objects of industry and of enjoyment, and have therefore, at the same time, added to the wealth of the country. In support of this opinion, the collection of vases made by Sir W. Hamilton is instanced. These, through the instrumentality of Mr. Wedgwood, were the means of creating a new branch of manufacture which gave extensive employment to artists and artizans, improved a great staple trade, and the particular branch of industry to which this manufacture appertains, to such a degree, that productions almost rivalling the originals in their execution were the result of this acquisition. In a pamphlet on the "State of Learning and the Fine Arts," by Mr. Millingen, these vases are thus spoken of:—"A few objects, and those of little value, were contained in the British Museum till the year 1778, when Parliament granted a sum of 8400*l.* for the purchase of Sir W. Hamilton's collection of ancient Greek vases, and various other objects of art. This

collection, perhaps the finest ever known at that period, was a great acquisition to the country, and ought to have opened the eyes of the Government to the utility arising from similar acquisitions. In fact, the discovery of these vases, and their communication to the public by engravings, coinciding with the discoveries of Herculaneum and Pompeii, may be considered an essential epoch in the history of the Arts, and contributed greatly to their revival. The spirited designs which ornamented them were studied by artists, and contributed singularly to improve the public taste. Their elegant forms, as well as the perfect quality of the clay and varnish, were analysed and imitated by Wedgwood, and other chemists and manufacturers. The public was so much pleased with these imitations, that our potteries were improved, and became an object of extensive demand in foreign countries. In a fiscal point of view, there can be no doubt that the money expended for the purchase of the collection in question has been repaid a hundred-fold to the nation at large, and proportionally to the revenue."

The Library of the British Museum and National Gallery of Paintings afford instances of incalculable benefit to every department of literature and art. As, therefore, the collection and exhibition of works of art have not only promoted the moral elevation of

the people, but have also stimulated, in a great degree, their industry, it is the opinion of the Committee that, upon this occasion, a direct patronage of high art will yield a proportionably higher influence. "In the instance of Munich," says Mr. Wyse, in his evidence, "fresco-painting has been applied to almost every class of art, and every department of history, beginning with the very earliest Greek history, and going down to the history of the present day. In the King's Palace, for instance, you meet with illustrations of the Iliad, passages from the Greek and Roman mythologies, from the earlier and later Greek and Roman histories, from the early legends of the Germans; and continued from thence onward, a series of the most important historical events, especially from the history of Bavaria; finally, in the apartments of the Queen particularly, you have illustrations of the most remarkable poets of modern times, but especially of the poets of Germany."—"There is thus an opportunity for the display of every description of talent, and every description of knowledge. The effect upon the public at large is equally diversified; the higher class has an opportunity of judging of the propriety of the classic illustrations, while I have seen the peasants of the mountains of Tyrol holding up their children, and explaining to them the scenes of the Bavarian history almost every Sunday. This fact

strikingly illustrates an observation I heard from Cornelius himself, that it was a difficult thing to impress upon the mind of a nation at large a general love of art, unless you were to use as an instrument painting upon a large scale, and fresco was particularly suited for this purpose. It was not to be expected that the lower classes of the community should have any just appreciation of the delicacies and finer characteristics of painting in oil, and that they required large and simple forms, very direct action, and in some instances exaggerated expression. These paintings carry down the history of Bavaria to a recent period." The following passage, also from the evidence of Mr. Wyse, instances the employment of fresco in the decoration of a private dwelling: — "I would direct the attention of the Committee to one instance among many, which I had the opportunity of observing with considerable attention. The house to which I allude is a castle belonging to Professor Bothman Holwey, upon the left bank of the Rhine. The castle is a restoration from very inconsiderable fragments in the Byzantine or early German style of architecture; between both, indeed; the internal decorations are a mixture of the early Greek, with additions of the early German architecture, and at intervals are introduced portions of sculpture and paintings from the Dussel-

dorf school generally, in reference to the early history of Germany. The whole effect is extremely light and pleasing, and, as far as I understood from the Professor himself, the expense was, from the number of artists at present engaged in that department in Germany, not very considerable. I have seen houses in Frankfort where a similar application, though not to the same extent, of fresco-painting has been used, and I collected from those who were well acquainted with the Arts, that every day it was extending, particularly in Prussia."

The evidence of the same gentleman shows the influence of the encouragement of Art upon trade and manufactures:—"With reference to subordinate branches of the Fine Arts, painting on glass, enamel painting, and casting in bronze, will you have the goodness to give the Committee the result of your observations?—It has been found that the encouragement of fresco-painting has led to a parallel encouragement in other branches of art; for instance, to the introduction of encaustic painting, which is quite new in Germany, though practised for about half a century in Rome. The advantages of encaustic painting are, greater brilliancy and greater durability. Under the direction of the King, a series of landscapes are in the course of execution for the decoration of the arcades. A branch of art, also little

known till lately at Munich, is porcelain painting; it has reached a high degree of excellence, emulating, if not surpassing in many particulars, the other celebrated manufactories of Europe."

The Committee have not been able, from the abrupt termination of the Session of Parliament, and consequently of their inquiry, to deliver an opinion as to the probable amount of the expense of carrying out a sufficient plan for the encouragement of art; but they are of opinion that in pursuing a well-directed system, a moderate annual expenditure could accomplish very important results, if not all that could be desired.

"Whilst the Committee, in conclusion, regret that they could not investigate the whole subject so fully as they desired, and as its importance demanded, they unanimously recommend the evidence herewith presented to the House to its favourable consideration, with a view to its receiving the immediate attention of the Government, and in the hope that our new Houses of Parliament may hand down to posterity a memorial, as well of the genius of our artists as of the importance attached by the country to the nobler productions of art, and that the subjects embodied in such representations, whether by painting or sculpture, may serve to perpetuate the events of our past history, and the persons of our public benefactors, in grateful remembrance of the people."

This is the substance of the Report; and what style of art soever be ultimately adopted, all must concur in an opinion expressed by Sir M. A. Shee, that this is "a most favourable opportunity for calling forth the genius of our country, and promoting the Fine Arts to the utmost extent of which they are capable; it is the only opportunity that has occurred for many years, and if it be suffered to pass unheeded, it may be said that there is no hope in this country for artists in the higher department of the arts."

Another great stimulus to the advancement of art in this country is the continued influence the opening of the National Gallery has produced, both on the artists themselves and on the public. In a return before us, given in to the House of Commons by Mr. Seguier, we find the number of visitors was—

In 1826	110,051	In 1834	89,374
1827	69,461	1835	127,268
1828	57,925	1836	125,747
1829	50,963	1837	113,937
1830	60,321	1838	397,649
1831	71,978	1839	466,850
1832	76,820	1840	503,011
1833	79,440		

The number of students admitted to paint in the National Gallery for the following years was:—

In 1838 .. 1016. In 1839 .. 1162. In 1840 .. 1257.

We have not the means of furnishing the numbers previous to 1838. In the last year—viz., 1847, the return gives of the public, 808,060; of the number of students, 1791. Thus we perceive a gradual source of influential attraction, which must increase the knowledge and love of art in the country.

It is gratifying to find that the Government is now extending its patronage in places of trust to artists themselves. On the death of Mr. Seguier, Mr. Eastlake was appointed; and since that artist's resignation, Mr. Uwins; both professing the highest department of the art. As to artists not being the best judges to be consulted respecting the purchase of works by the old masters, there are always at hand some of the best skilled to advise in the various purchases of pictures, whom the Treasury can consult; neither do we consider the opinion of those to be of any weight who decry the interference of artists in the preservation and restoring of the national pictures; they are most likely to serve as a check to the excesses of the picture cleaners, who, in removing the old varnish, often remove the glazings also, as we perceive took place with the various works exhibited in the Louvre, vivified previous to their being hung up by the French experts. Notwithstanding the great sensation produced by the assertions that the pictures lately re-varnished in the

National Gallery were over-cleaned, we must give our humble acquiescence in their having been judiciously treated; as it was done under the immediate superintendence of the keeper, Mr. Eastlake, by two of the most skilful picture-cleaners in London—viz., Mr. Seguier and Mr. Brown. And while we are on this subject, we may observe, in passing, that the dealers in pictures are now becoming influential in advancing modern art; for as there are fewer fine works of the Italian, Flemish, and Dutch schools in the market, those specimens of English art that are brought from time to time under the hammer have been purchased by them at higher prices than the public generally have offered. Nor do we despair, ultimately, of the Government making purchases of English art, so as to form a collection of the best works of the English school. In this department much has been done, and will be accomplished, by the splendid donations and bequests of individuals—witness the late magnificent gift of Mr. Vernon, placing the whole of his collection, so rich in English art, at the disposal of the trustees. And as shortly either a very large addition must be made to the building, or a new Gallery erected, we must embrace this opportunity of calling the attention of the trustees and the public to the removal of the Cartoons of Raffaelle to London from Hampton Court, where they are not safe from

destruction either from fire or damp, and are in a measure unavailing as works of study, from the distance from town, and, for the same reason, as influential sources of improvement on the public taste. In corroboration of these remarks, we may quote a few extracts from the Report of the Committee of the House of Commons, on the occasion of minutes of evidence being laid before them relative to their safety from a fire happening in one of the flues which meet behind the wainscoting surrounding the room. The following is a portion of the evidence given by Mr. Grundy, who has the charge of the apartments and pictures at Hampton Court.

Has there been no general examination of the flues since that accident?—*A.* Not to my knowledge.

Q. Do you not, as the keeper of the Gallery, think it is proper that there should be an examination of the flues near that Gallery, so as to preserve the pictures? — *A.* Decidedly.

Q. Is it not more necessary at Hampton Court, because those flues are connected with buildings inhabited by a great variety of persons, and therefore any single person who happened to light a fire in one of those flues, in a separate apartment, may endanger the whole building? — *A.* Most certainly.

Q. Are we to understand that there are a great number of persons having apartments in the Palace,

under the same room with the pictures, in which parties live, and in which there are fires? — *A.* Yes.

Q. If a fire were to happen in any one of those rooms, the whole collection might be destroyed? — *A.* Yes, certainly.

So much for their danger from fire. As to the damp situation, the late Mr. Haydon, in his examination, in answer to the question whether he thought the Cartoons might be safely removed to London, replied—"Yes, I do, with perfect safety; and perhaps with more safety remain in London than at Hampton Court, because there is a fountain that scatters damp all around."

The late Mr. Seguier, in his answers, is made to say that they are in good condition; which must be an error, as, from many careful investigations in this matter, we should say they have met with much rough usage, both before and after the Revolution in England, and since then, in the many quarters they have been placed in, until the room they now occupy was built by William the Third expressly for their reception. But, at all events, as their value in assisting the advancement of the higher departments of painting is manifest, nothing ought to stand in the way of their removal to London. The expense of covering them with glass ought to form no obstacle, since they would be perfectly protected by such

means; neither would any reflected lights on the glass interfere, as we see proofs of in the two Correggios already in the National Gallery. Until a new Gallery is built, room might be found for them on the capacious walls of the British Museum, where, according to the last returns of the visitors to that collection, thousands will be seen to congregate.

We come now to investigate another means of spreading a taste for the fine arts, and greater encouragement to painting—viz., the Art Union of London. As it is now so well known, and also its power for working good or evil is so great, it cannot be passed over in an investigation of this nature. The good it has done is certainly its bringing the subject annually before the public, and therefore drawing attention to the Fine Arts; but by its taking too large a spread, it has encouraged a great deal of mediocre talent. On the Society lately procuring a charter from the Government, this was felt; and on the occasion of granting an indemnity to their making use of a lottery, in preference to other associations, the Board of Trade inserted one or two conditional clauses, for the purpose of making the subscriptions more effective in the encouragement of works of excellence:—

"1. That the whole number of works of art from which the prizes were to be taken should be selected

by a committee, instead of permitting the prizeholders to select, as heretofore, from the various public exhibitions of the year.

"2. The abandonment altogether of an annual distribution of engravings from modern pictures; and in lieu thereof, the occasional distribution of engravings of a superior character as prizes amongst the subscribers; and,

"3. The retention of ten per cent. out of the receipts for the purchase of works not for distribution, but for public exhibition."

At the last meeting of the Society for the distribution of the prizes, the Report stated that the subscription had fallen off 6000*l.* since that of the former year, which they, in some measure, attributed to the interference of the Board of Trade; and some of the members also remarked, that other societies, adopting the principle of a committee of selection, had prematurely become extinct. There is certainly something more pleasing in a prizeholder being able to select a subject gratifying to his own taste, than having one selected for him, which, perhaps, he has no liking for; at the same time, we cannot see how indiscriminate purchases, by those who are not judges of art, can benefit the progress of painting, for which the Society was ostensibly formed, and for which the privilege of a lottery was granted.

With regard to the second regulation of the Board, —as we were always of opinion that it would be detrimental to line-engraving of a high class, and, consequently, foster the publication of greater numbers of mezzotinto prints, we cannot but express a sincere wish that this may be rectified. Our idea certainly goes along with the Board of Trade, that a certain number of fine proofs, in line-engraving, should be selected as prizes, to be distributed among the holders; for example, a print of 'Napoleon and the Pope,' after the late Sir David Wilkie, is in the course of publication: a work of the highest merit as an engraving, raising even the reputation of the artist, John Henry Robinson, to a still higher position; and supports the superiority we possess over continental engraving. Yet, with all these recommendations, it will be doubtful whether Mr. Moon, the enterprising publisher, will be sufficiently remunerated for his risk; we should, therefore, suggest, that a hundred first proofs of this, or of works of similar excellence should be purchased, for the purpose of distribution as prizes. And while we are on this subject, we must make a few remarks on a part of the Report read at the last meeting, relative to the engravings lately published by them. It says—"The Council will not shut their eyes to the fact, that the

prints last sent out have not been wholly satisfactory: it must be remembered that they are, in this respect, wholly in the hands of the engravers. It is due to themselves to state, as regards the engravings for 1847, that the propriety of refusing to distribute the impressions from the plates, when finished, was seriously discussed by the council, but it was thought that such a course would be scarcely consistent with their duty as trustees." Upon this it is proper to observe, that the plates from which the impressions are taken are electrotype plates, cast from the original by means of the galvanic process; and if the original engraving is finished much with the burnisher, it can never produce a favourable matrix to make other plates from, for in extracting it out of the mould, it naturally tears up the whole of the edges of the lines. In this way a work becomes dull, and of a uniform darkness: and, indeed, unless the greatest care and skill is used, the acid in the trough corrodes the surface of the original previous to its forming a deposition of the particles of metal; hence the process often renders nugatory the very best exertions of the engraver, and the higher department of line suffers accordingly.

With regard to the beneficial effects of the National

Gallery upon the arts, generally speaking, or the taste of the public, we candidly must confess it has as yet worked very little change; the annual exhibitions have shown the same uncertain mode of procedure in painting, notwithstanding the easy reference to the best examples of many of the celebrated masters, the same feeble emanations of light and shade, and the same want of union of the background with the figures. Instead of its supporting and enriching the several groups and single figures, so as to extend and give solidity to the whole, it is generally made to recede, as if afraid to encroach on the several masses, so that they appear isolated and unimportant. Since these Essays were written, the English school has lost some of its greatest ornaments, such as Wilkie, Hilton, Newton, Callcott, Constable, and Collins, in lieu of which Herbert, Frost, Cope, Frith, Ward, and Webster have entered the field, all of whom, notwithstanding their excellence in invention and correct drawing, exhibit, as yet, no improvement in colour, compared with those who have gone before them; indeed, except in the case of Mulready, (who becomes more vigorous every year,) the art is a mere ebbing and flowing within a given boundary. In a letter written by the late Sir D. Wilkie to Sir George Beaumont, we find

the same expressions and criticisms, equally applicable to the year 1848 as to that of 1823; it runs thus:—

"24, Lower Phillimore-place, 14th Feb. 1823.

"DEAR SIR GEORGE,—Many hearty thanks for your very kind letter. Your opinions upon the qualities of colour and surface in pictures I have always agreed with, and your present illustrations of them I think exceedingly happy and convincing. Coldness of tone, and smoothness and dryness of surface, have certainly—what you urge as the surest proof of inferiority—the want of the appearance of a monied value. That they never sell for so much as richly-coloured pictures, is quite conclusive. I only wish that such arguments as you have used, and the authorities you have quoted, would have their due weight upon those who guide, if not the taste of the public, at least the taste of artists upon this point; those artists, I mean, who paint large pictures for the Exhibition.

"The decline of all schools of colouring appears to be into whiteness, and into those corresponding tints of common-place chilliness that can alone harmonize with white.

"If I might point out to you another defect, very prevalent of late in our pictures, and one of the same

contracted character with those you so happily illustrate, it would be that of the want of breadth, and in others, a perpetual division and subdivision of parts, to give what their perpetrators call space; add to this, a constant disturbing and torturing of everything, whether in light or shadow, by a niggling touch, to produce fulness of subject. This is the very reverse of what we see in Cuyp or Wilson, and even, with all his high finishing, in Claude.

"I have been warning our friend Collins against this, and was also urging young Landseer to beware of it; and in what I have been doing lately myself, have been studying much from Rembrandt and from Cuyp, so as to acquire what the great masters succeeded so well in—namely, that power by which the chief objects, and even the minute finishing of parts, tell over everything that is meant to be subordinate in their pictures. Sir Joshua had this remarkably, and could even make the features of the face tell over everything, however strongly painted. I find that repose and breadth in the shadows and halftints do a great deal towards it. Zoffany's figures derive great consequence from this; and I find that those who have studied light and shadow the most never appear to fail in it.

"D. W."

We cannot omit noticing one of the names mentioned in this letter, ("young Landseer,") without acknowledging how much the advancement of the fine arts in this country is indebted to him. From the age of fifteen, he has gradually moved onward, not only elevating that department of painting to which he is more especially engaged, but giving to all his works that distinctive character which marks the man of genius drawing in the school of nature. He may be said to have created a new era in animal portraiture, and the imitators of Morland, Ward, and others, have been swallowed up in the multitude of his followers. In some measure, his popularity has been assisted by the print-publishers, who have, for a long period, kept his works continually before the public, and spread his name all over Europe by means of engravings from his pictures, often to the exclusion of many meritorious artists from a certain share of the popular applause. We remember the same combination of adventitious circumstances operating upon the reputation of the late Sir D. Wilkie; and though we would not be understood to infer that the works of Landseer drove the engravings after Wilkie in a great measure out of the market, for Wilkie, like other favourites, had enjoyed his full share of popular applause, and was averse to have his pictures en-

graved in any other style than the line manner; but the principal reason is the continual wish of mankind for something new, both in the subjects and their mode of execution. It is worthy of remark how much the taste of the country is regulated by the publishers of the metropolis. The Print-sellers' Association, a body of men composed of the retail vendors of engravings, not only demand a list of the number of proofs and print impressions struck off, but by abstaining to subscribe for any works but such as they imagine a large profit can be raised out of, cripple not only rising talent, but that diversity of subject so necessary to the cultivation of taste in the various branches of the community. These matters, however, often regulate themselves as far as the engravings after popular artists are concerned; and the duration of prints after Morland, Wilkie, or Landseer, depends more upon the love of change in the people than in the rising up of a favourite rival. Within these few years we may also notice, as powerful auxiliaries to the spread of taste amongst many classes, the publication of periodicals and newspapers containing often excellent copies of the best works; nay, even Punch, or the London Charivari, contributes his share in the good cause,—for often, by holding up bad works to ridicule we

learn what to avoid. Still we must confess, notwithstanding all "these means and appliances to boot," the fine arts progress but slowly through the country, or rather, great artists are not created.*

* In closing this subject, it is necessary to revert to the impetus given by the encouragement of Government. We notice already, by works in the present exhibition of the Royal Academy, how much the higher attributes of historical painting are spreading their influence on this department of the art, and the works now executed on the walls of the House of Lords, by Maclise, Cope, Horsley, and Dyce, give hope of a foundation for a school possessing the essential qualities of drawing, expression, and composition.

THE END.

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